





POEMS
BY
RICHARD
REALF



POEMS BY
RICHARD REALF

POET.....
SOLDIER...
WORKMAN

WITH A MEMOIR BY
RICHARD J. HINTON



FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

NEW YORK AND LONDON

1898

COPYRIGHT, 1898, BY FUNK AND
WAGNALLS COMPANY. REGIS-
TERED AT STATIONERS' HALL,
LONDON, ENGLAND. PRINTED
IN THE UNITED STATES

PS 2690

.A1

1898

23504

TWO COPIES RECEIVED.



68198—
Nov. 22. 4 ~~1898~~ 1898

FORE-WORDS.

In presenting the collected poems of Richard Realf to the English-reading public, the editor disclaims any special effort at criticism or literary skill, beyond that required to gather, fill in an occasional missing word, or to arrange the poems in some sequence of subjects. But he believes that, in fulfilling his modest but laborious and patient task of compilation and arrangement, the result will be found to be a genuine addition to the noble stock of English poetry, a real contribution in the loftier sense to true literature.

The only merits claimed for the Memoir are the faithful feeling of friendship which directed the work, and the sincerity as well as charity of spirit which, I trust, has controlled the statement of facts and conditions that the writer would have been much more pleased to suppress than express, even in the modified way that he has sought to accomplish the task. What the world really has to do with is the subjective work of the man; the outgiving of the spiritual forces that animated one who, however sadly marred were his outer days, has left us a monumental record of his inner life and of the "mystic aspirations" which he so nobly expressed.

Conscious that I shall be censured for delay in accomplishing the work I can only say that I am sure the

Poet's renown and my friend's name have both gained by delay, which, for at least ten years, has been somewhat deliberate on my part, for I would not be the cause of inflicting more sorrow on one who had already suffered too much. So I waited till his wife had left us. Now that the book is at last before the reading world, and my obligation to the one who "fell by the way" is met, I may also declare that this is due very largely to the inseeing admiration for the Poet, and the constant service to myself amid many untoward conditions, of my beloved wife, Isabel, to whom I venture to make this public reference and thanks therefore.

I wish space would permit me to thank by name the many true friends of Richard Realf, as well as some who honor me with their friendship. But I can not do more than express gratitude in this general way, except as to a few who must be named because of their unselfish devotion to the dead Poet. I desire to express my thanks for valuable suggestions in the compilation of this volume to Rossiter Johnson, editor, scholar, critic; Mr. and Mrs. Cothran, of San Jose, and Col. Alexander J. Hawes, of San Francisco, Cal.; George S. Cothman, of Irvington, Ind.; Frances E. Riggs, of Detroit; Mrs. Cramer, and Dr. William Akin, of Chicago; Miss May J. Jordan, of Michigan; Mary P. Nimmo (now Mrs. Ballantyne), and Rev. Dr. Hanna, of Washington; and the Rev. David Schindler, formerly of Pittsburg.

RICHARD J. HINTON.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
Adieu, The Faint	209
Advice Gratis	154
Agony	226
Annunciation	118
Apocalypse	37
Army, The Grand	87
 B., To Miss H.	 28
Battle, In	42
Birthday Lily, A	148
Black Man's Answer, A	50
Burns	108
Byron	113
 Carpenter, To Frank B.	 24
Cellar, A Voice from a City	183
Children, The	165
Comfort	127
Communion	198
Condemned, A Voice from the	169
 Daguerreotype, On Receipt of a	 212
Deafness, To a Lady Afflicted with	15
Death and Desolation	139

	PAGE.
Decoration Day	18
Denunciation	123
Emancipation	51
England, To Mrs. M., of	26
Entreaty	143
Esoteric	167
Expectancy	144
Face, A Pictured	150
Farewell	146
Father-Love	103
Fragment, A	215
Fragments	173
Friend, To A	105
Friend, To An English	25
“Gently, Deal”	220
Gun, The Joy	76
H., to R. J.	32
Harriet, To	207
Hashish	189
Home, Going	162
Home, Letters from	116
“Hope For Thee, There is”	218
Human Statue, The	229
Hyatt, To Thaddeus	30
Impatience	200
Inauguration, The	131

	PAGE.
Indirection	152
Inspection	120
Insufficiency	6
Introspection	43
Io Triomphe!	73
Ireland's Misrule	95
Joshua, Wanted:	47
Justice or Trade	86
Kansas	101
Lawrence, The Defense of	89
Lessons, Our	83
Liberty and Charity, Of	64
Life and Love	114
Life's Dower	129
Lincoln, Abraham (1863)	13
Long? How	53
Lost One, My	221
Love's Fear	206
"Love is Deep, My"	205
Love's Marvel	17
Magdalena	176
Marriage Hymn	147
Memoriam, In	58
"Mollie"	192
Mother Remembrance	178
Name, A Man's	163
Nameless	180

	PAGE.
Nannie's Picture	31
Need You Not, We	79
Nobility	171
Notre Dame, In	30
Old Man's Idyl, An	157
Outcast, Song of the	185
"Pass, But Let It"	213
Passion	19
Patience	19
Peril, In	15
Picture, A	106
Pittsburg, Hymn of	142
Poet's Wealth, The	223
Prize Fight, The	159
Progress, Voice of	125
Question, The	81
Rally!	55
Reconciliation	172
Remember, I	197
"Rest, He Giveth His Beloved"	194
Rest, The Spirit of	147
Retrospective and Introspective	69
Salvete Milites!	61
Scrapbook, In a	24
Seamstress, Song of the	187
Sentinel Thoughts	175

	PAGE.
Silence Still	20
Slain, My	11
Soul's Despair, A	135
Spring, Song of	115
"Subdue You, We Will"	93
Suicide, Written on the Night of His	33
Summer Night	210
Swing, David	22
Sword Song, My	40
Symbolisms	3
Thought, The Palace of	216
Tones, My Lost	224
Tress, A Golden	149
Truth, The	28
Two	111
"Vates"	32
Viola's Song	17
Woman's Breath, A	168
Writing, To a Lady Chiding Me for Not	26
Year Ago, A	21

ILLUSTRATIONS

Richard Realf in 1878	<i>Frontispiece</i>
The Poet's Mother	34
Realf in 1858 and 1864	69
The Poet's Grave	112

MEMOIR

MEMOIR.

RICHARD REALF was born at Framfield, Sussex County, England, on the 14th of June, 1834. His sister, Mrs. Sarah Whapham, gives as the date the same month and day in the year 1832. The poet himself, in his autobiographical notes, written for the "Little Classics" series, gives the later date, and all correlative testimony goes to prove its correctness. The poet's venerable father, writing after the death of his gifted son to the latter's warm friend, now deceased, the Rev. Alexander Clark, D.D., of Pittsburg, declares that his son "was a child of wonders for learning." He could "read well at three and a half years old"—his mother, Martha, being his teacher, for there was no school near. He was fond of playing preacher, of building chapels, and of gathering the neighbor children as a congregation. For a child he sang well, and was fond of giving out hymns. He often said, "It will be funny when I get to be a parson and preach!" At chapel Sunday-school he was always at the head of his class, as he was also at the day-school. Before he was nine years old he wrote a few lines on the death of some rabbits. He worked in the field at an early age, and then went "to service"

for a time. As he wished to go to sea, his father went with him to the navy yard at Portsmouth. He was rejected, however, and then returned to Brighton, where an elder daughter, Ellen, was employed in the household service of Sir John Cordy Burrows, M.D. The father's letter states that Mrs. Parnell Stafford early recognized the boy's ability, and aided materially in giving him a good education in the Burrow's household. After a short period of service he became a secretary to Mr. and Mrs. Stafford, and when Mr. Stafford died, he made his wife promise to care for the boy Richard. Some immature poems were published under the title of "Guesses at the Beautiful," when he was seventeen. His father writes that it was after this that Lady Byron aided him, stating that she desired to make a "farmer" of his son. This, of course, is incorrect, as Real was "articled" to a land steward in charge of the Noel estate in Derbyshire, a business of a semi-professional character, requiring a knowledge of law and land values and uses. The boy poet had previously worked in the studio of the sculptor Gibson. His eyes, however, failed him. Mr. Realf, Sr., states, as does Mrs. Sarah Whapham, that Mr. John Burrows, of Brighton, England, was at the time of Richard Realf's death, and probably still is, in possession of personal papers relative to the poet, which his father and himself had gathered. These papers have never yet been made public.

Sir John Cordy Burrows, by whom Richard Realf was first employed at Brighton. he being then in his

twelfth year, was by profession a physician, and had been mayor of Brighton. He was made a knight on the occasion of some royal visit, as is the custom in Great Britain, and was a man of liberal mind and generous public spirit. He was always the friend of the gifted boy, and when the first grave misfortune befell him, stood by and aided effectually, as did also Miss de Gardinier, a prominent lady in Brighton, the daughter of a retired colonel, who was well known then as the personal friend of Louis Philippe. The ex-mayor and this generous-hearted lady were the ones who helped Realf to his American career, and Dr. Loomis, of New York City, secured for him the position of assistant superintendent of the Five Points House of Industry, then the most notable beneficent institution in the metropolis.

The birthplace of Richard Realf is in the midst of one of the loveliest sections of south England, the land of lush greenery, flowers, and natural beauty. It is the famous Arundel Castle, one of the homes of the Howard family, made more famous in later years by the labors of the Arundel Society in unearthing, preparing, and publishing the early movements, deeds, accounts, etc., of the feudal dukes of Norfolk.

Realf was a boy of nine years when he wrote his first rhymes; he was then going to a neighboring village school through the kindness of Mr. John Whapham. This gentleman was a market gardener of considerable means, a warm friend of the Realf family, and to his son at a

later date Sarah Realf was married. Richard Realf was the fifth child in a family of ten, several of whom died during childhood. Two of his brothers were soldiers in the British army, both becoming non-commissioned officers, and serving with honor in the Crimea, each receiving the Victoria Cross. One brother is still living at Buxteed, where the parents also resided at the date of the poet's death. The father was a rural policeman in 1834, enrolled in the West Sussex Constabulary, a position which, in the almost minute social hierarchy of English rural life, must be regarded as quite superior to that of the agricultural laborer. He is a man of character, greatly respected in the neighborhood, and evidently endowed with much more than the average of bucolic intelligence. Martha, his wife, is also a person of superior breeding and ability. She was Richard's first teacher. It is reported that after hearing any hymn or song twice or thrice sung by his mother, he could, when two years old, catch the words and tune and sing them perfectly in a sweet baby voice. He never worked in the field, as most village and country boys did in the rural England of that date. Mr. Whapham paid about sixty cents per week for him at the nearest school, requiring him only to work about his shop and garden on Saturdays in return. Richard worked also for the village undertaker, but he was a rude drinking and swearing man, and the boy could not get along with him. After this his father took him to Portsmouth, but the commandant refused to enroll him. He had two

sisters "at service" in Brighton: Ellen, who lived in the Burrows' household, and Mary Ann, who was a domestic in that of the Staffords. Mr. Stafford was a physician and a man of fine attainments and intellectual character, sympathetic in spirit, and was at once attracted to the handsome village boy, whose very features spoke of the effluent soul within. Richard was early transferred to the Stafford home, not as a domestic, but an amanuensis. His handwriting was always exquisitely formed, clear and perfect. The San Francisco reporter, to whom Col. Tappan handed his famous death sonnet—his "Swan Song," as I like to term it,—declared he had never seen a manuscript firmer in strokes or more clear in ensemble, even in the portion which had evidently been written after the poison took effect.

Mrs. Stafford belonged to the famous Stewart-Parnell family, being an aunt to the great Irish leader. The boy poet received his education by her bounty and it was a good one. He read well and widely, was grounded in Latin, and knew something of French. Of literature, classic and English, he had quite a wide range and possessed a severe, keen critical taste. Richard Realf, in deportment and daily life, was always as if to the "manner born," and that of the best school, too. Unlike other Englishmen of my generation whom I have known as winning culture and securing recognition, though born of labor and struggle, he was never too shy or overforward, he never felt any disability because of origin, or forced personal recognition. He obtained

it naturally, and if the "blue blood" theory had any vitality in fact, those who met him and knew not of his family associations, would have readily testified of him as a born aristocrat—a gentleman by birth. He was one by nature. The boy was radical also, in the English sense, and of the period. The glamor of '48 was still in the mental atmosphere. What Charles Mackey, Eliza Cook, Ebenezer Elliot, and Gerald Massey had sung for Labor and Democracy, was still inspiring and uplifting. There was a social fad also in patronizing the people, when individual units of that somewhat amorphous material showed capacity above the average.

In the "Little Classic" sketch already referred to, Realf describes his youthful position and surroundings at Brighton. He wrote:

"At the age of fifteen or thereabouts I began to write verses—'lispings in numbers, for the numbers came.' When some sixteen years old I hired out as 'boy-of-all-work' to a master mechanic in the neighborhood, grooming his horse, taking care of his garden, and generally discharging whatever menial duties were allotted to me. When about seventeen I grew very weary of the gross character of my surroundings. I did not live at home, but at my 'master's,' who was a drunken and brutal man, and with the consent of my parents paid a visit to my elder sister, then living in the family of a physician at Brighton, Sussex, as a domestic servant. The wife of this gentleman, a lady of literary taste, manifested a great liking for me, and at her invitation I became her amanuensis. Two or

three weeks after I entered on this new life her husband died. Shortly thereafter an eminent physician, who had paid special attention to the then new science of phrenology, visited Brighton for the purpose of delivering a series of lectures on that subject before the Brighton Scientific Association, of which he was an honorary member. He was the guest of my benefactress, and became interested in me. One day he borrowed from me, ostensibly for the purpose of more careful reading, a number of my crude ventures in verse. The next morning I learned to my astonishment that in his lecture of the preceding evening he had read some of them in illustrating the organ of ideality. Brighton, the fashionable watering-place of England, was then in the height of the 'society' season, and among his auditors were many whose names were famous in literature and science. A great many people came to see me thereupon, among them Lady Byron and her daughter Ada. Rogers, the poet, sent for me, being too old and infirm to come himself. Mrs. Jameson, Miss Mitford, Miss Martineau, Lady Jane Peel, and others, also began to pet me. I had shown the possession of some slight imitative talent as a molder of images in clay, and Gibson, the sculptor, thought there was the making of a creative artist in me. Among themselves they determined to publish a collection of my verses, and this was done in 1852, under the title of 'Guesses at the Beautiful,' the editor, Charles de la Pryme, Fellow of Trinity College, being a nephew of Thackeray. The little book was, of course, valuable only for what it promised, not at all for what it contained. Lady Byron grew greatly interested in me, chiefly, at first, on account of the representations made to her concerning me by Rev. Frederick W. Robertson, who resided but

two doors from the home of the lady with whom I lived.

. . .

"The natural tendency of it all was to make me forgetful of the honest peasant ancestry from which I sprang. So I wrote to Lady Byron, who was then, in 1853, at her country residence, begging her to get me away from these false surroundings. I think that, with the exception of my mother, she was the noblest woman I ever knew. She at once made arrangements for me to go down into Leicestershire, to her nephew, Mr. Noel, manager of one of her large estates, with whom I was to study the science of agriculture as well as prosecute my literary purposes."

His sister Sarah intimates that Mrs. Stafford was over indulgent with her brother, and gave him an undue amount of pocket money, as well as jewelry. There is no doubt at all that Realf was petted a good deal, and that by a social circle which might readily unfit him for the struggles of life. He, however, had the good sense to perceive himself this incongruity, and it was at his own request that he was sent to Derbyshire to learn the business of a land steward. He was then well on in his nineteenth year. Remaining there for a number of months, and apparently with content and reasonable success, the village household in Sussex, as well as the Byron circle at Brighton, was soon roused to disquietude by reports of Realf's disappearance, and of a social scandal in the Noel mansion. After some weeks of doubt as to his whereabouts, Richard Realf was found by his father on the streets of Southampton, in a semi-demented state, ragged, bare-footed, destitute, and sing-

ing ballads for pennies. He was taken home and carefully nursed. It appeared also that before reaching this condition in which he was found, he had lived in an expensive hotel at Eastbourne, a fashionable watering-place, under an assumed name, where he run up quite a large account. This was met shortly after by his father. Some weeks had passed, during which the young man had wandered over England, indulging in acts which certainly indicated a disordered mind. What had occurred has never been made clear; that there was a woman in the case, is certain. She was of the Noel family also, and several years the senior of the young poet. His sister Sarah states that this lady became pregnant, and an elder brother, arriving from the continent, found Realf, and beat him unmercifully. Richard himself never spoke of it, except as, in his death poem, he sung that—

He wrought for liberty, till his own wound
(He had been stabbed), concealed with painful art
Through wasting years, mastered him, and he
 swooned,
And sank there where you see him lying now
With the word "Failure" written on his brow.—

The story indicated in that other pathetic lyric, "A Golden Tress," may also perhaps illustrate the mental as well as physical effect of the injury then received.

For myself I have, after patient delving and judicial inquiry, come to the conclusion that the Noel episode, in its injurious effects, mental as well as physical, (Realf always complained of periodic trouble

in his head, and once told me this was due to an injury received by him when he was in his twentieth year), is mainly responsible for much of the peculiar conduct that marked his after life. In the oftentimes overwrought imagination, perhaps unduly "peering into the immortalities," the recurrent effect of the permanent injury inflicted by the spirit of brutal caste as much as by the passion of virtuous indignation, furnishes at least a rational explanation of acts that are so far foreign to all other things that are so plain in Realf's life, that they can only be explained by temporary dementia and not by the hypothesis of overwrought and melancholic temperament. Realf was gentle, refined, courteous, "breathing freely in high altitudes of spirit," beloved by all but one who came in contact with him; yet his days are marred by strange disappearances, his life by weird passion, and his career degraded by acts of apparent dishonor. All who knew him as I knew him would defend him against such expressions, and yet they remain true, because the facts can not be obliterated. With no desire to excuse or to extenuate because my friend, in spite of all, is the David of my early and later years, admired in life and the more beloved in the decades that have followed his untimely departure by reason of the sadness I have traced and the suffering that, I have learned, clustered so bleak and black about him, I have reached the conclusion that Richard Realf suffered at times from some form of dementia.

It was then that his best friends in Brighton, as well

as the dear homely household in the Sussex village, deemed it wise that he should make a place for himself in the United States. His sister Mary, not long married, had already sailed over the seas and settled with her husband at Cumberland, Maryland. An aunt, Mrs. Hynes, had long before emigrated and her family still live in one of the Western States. Richard Realf landed in New York during April, 1855, and began a new and hopeful life at once at the Five Points House of Industry.

One of the strongest impressions made on Realf by his youthful residence at Brighton came through his contact with a famous evangelical clergyman and orator of the established Church—the Rev. Frederick W. Robertson—two volumes of whose eloquent sermons were published in this country some thirty-five years since. It was at his suggestion that Richard Realf became an active member of the Brighton Workingmen's Institute. He wrote in after days several eloquent and grateful tributes to the memory of the English divine, two of which appeared in the *Christian Radical* (Pittsburg) in 1871, and I find in a letter from the field, written during 1863, the following:

“His voice was the rarest to which I have ever listened. A blind man, being a stranger to our language, would inevitably have loved him hearing him speak; and there was no passion that he could not lull, no sorrow that he could not soothe, no devil that he could not exorcise, nor any child whom he could not charm with the

benignancy of his voice. How the people of Brighton flocked to him! Peers and princesses, the artist and the poet with their fine spiritual cravings, Gunnybags, the millionaire, with his heart of a metallic hue, the fisherman from his boat, the seamstress from her needle, the plowman from his fields, and the prisoner from his cell,—all, of whatever caste, class, clique, or condition, in the light of his sublime manhood stood equal unto themselves as unto him and unto God. I have within the walls of his church witnessed the finest courtesies that I ever saw, the infection of his glorious graciousness being upon all his listeners.”

Another influence that affected Realf for good was that of a large-hearted American reformer, Mr. Pease, the transformer of the once infamous Five Points of New York. Realf spent sixteen months in the House of Industry. He was as ready at the toil of teaching and serving as we in Kansas and the army found him in after days at fighting for liberty and union. During this bright period it was my fortune to meet Realf and become his friend. As chairman of a lecture committee in a young men's temperance and literary club, I invited him to deliver to us a lecture on poverty and labor, which he did with the heartiest interest. His days were busy ones. Elsewhere in this memoir I have sketched the work of that period. But he early became animated by that restless and heroic spirit which filled the “fifties” with its almost divine fury of resistance to slavery. This fresh voice was not one of sloth; its clear special tenor was resonant with

protest against suffering and wrong, pure in its appeals for righteousness, and passionate in denunciation of oppression. He made friends on every hand, and the memories then created still keep his presence as a glowing radiance.

Among the letters sent me, I find one of the Five Points period written to his sister Sarah, which contains the only reference I can find to the sister and family who located in Maryland. The letter is dated at New York, July 28th, 1856. The poet writes to "dear Sallie":

"I have been down into Maryland and Virginia, amongst my own and your dear friends. Don't I wish you could have been with me—that's all. No, it isn't all; for then, much as I enjoyed myself, and pleasantly as the time passed, my visit would have been a still happier one. They live 400 miles away from New York, but with our facilities for traveling it really is not much further than from Uskfield to London. We do not in America measure distances by miles, but by hours. I started at 6 o'clock at night, and had I traveled all the way without stopping, should have reached Cumberland at noon the next day. Pretty rapid—eh, Sallie?

"I heard from Miss de Gardinier the other day. I was so pleased that I couldn't help crying, when she told me that you were to go and live with Ellen. She says Ellen is so good, which, being the case, I hope you will follow the advice and instructions of that dear sister implicitly and without questioning. Do you know, Sallie, that unhesitating obedience is the highest altitude unto which any one can attain?

Not, of course, obedience to wrong or falsehood—but obedience to right and truth. I know that I used to think very differently—and so the sorrows and the agonies came; had I understood this better, these might have been spared. Wouldn't you like to come to America? I guess you would. Yes, but I don't want you to do so. What would our dear, dear father and mother do, if we should all leave them? I should like much—much more than I can say—to see you and have you near me, but I would rather never see you than consent to your leaving England. I haven't much time to talk about this, Sallie, but my heart is very full with it, nevertheless. If father and mother were ten or fifteen years younger, then I would try and bring you all over, but that can't be now; and so I want you to stop near them. . . .

“You are almost a woman now, dear Sallie, which, when I think of, makes me tremble. From my position I see so much that is fearful—and in the young too—that it makes me doubly anxious for your welfare. You will try to be very good, won't you, Sallie dear? Father and mother, you know, are growing old now, and couldn't bear much sorrow. They shall never have to endure any on your account, shall they, Sallie?”

Realf's memories of his early home remained vivid to the last. I find another letter to sister Sarah, written in 1858, at the period of his John Brown relations. It can, however, be referred to here:

“CHATHAM, CANADA WEST, MAY 14th, 1858.

“Good morning, my beloved sister! It is 'Fair-day' at Uckfield. Did you think I had forgotten it? But I haven't. I never forget anything connected, however

and at various intervals my wrong or ignorance—
 has sometimes to right and wrong. I know that I need
 go with very diffidence and as the wrongs and
 the rights come, and I understand that better, these
 rights have been spared. Wouldn't you like to
 come to America? I give you wholly. You, but I
 can't send you as yet. I'd like to see you, dear
 father and mother. Is it so about the letter then? I
 should like to hear from you more than I can say—to see
 you and know you and you. But I must rather wait
 and you must remain in your loving England. I
 know much more of you about you. Well, but my
 heart is very full with it. nevertheless, if father and
 mother were ten or fifteen years younger than I would
 say and bring you all over, but that can't be now; and
 so I wait and wait and wait.

THE POET'S MOTHER

"You were the mother of the poet, Sallie, which,
 when I think of, makes me weep. From the position
 I am so much that is that I—said to the young son—
 that it might be—
MRS. MARTHA KEALE your mother. You
 will be to be very good, my dear Sallie, just
 father and mother, you know, are growing old now,
 and would I have much more. They shall never have
 to read any on your account, shall they, Sallie?"

During a journey in his early home remained with
 in the line. I had written down to sister Sarah, written
 in 1848, at the period of his John Brown relations. It
 can, however, be referred to here.

"CHATHAM, CANADA WEST, MAY 1868, 1868.

"Good morning, my beloved Sallie. It is 'Friday'
 at Chatham. Did you think I had forgotten it? But I
 have't. I never forget anything connected, however



distantly, with my dear home. I remember all the trees: the willow, the oak, the ash, and the poplar. I know all the hedgerows, the copses, the little brooks and the silent springs, by heart. I recollect the paths where the daisies grew; the hillsides where the prim-roses and the violets nestled; the meadows where the cowslips bloomed. . . . How many times, when I have been worn and weary, have I flung myself down on the coarse prairie grass, to shut the eyes of my senses, and open the eyes of my soul upon home. If ever you should be such a wanderer as I have been, roaming among strangers, cast in perilous places, O how your heart will go down upon its knees with a choking cry for home! Why, Sallie, I have sung 'Home, sweet Home,' when no eye but God's has seen me, and when no ear but His has listened; because if I had not sung it my full heart would have broken; and the tears would roll down my cheeks, and I would tremble till I could hardly sit on my horse. . . .

"Ah me! dear Sallie! It is very long now since I, a little child, would wander in and out among the crowded cattle, and around the 'shows,' and about the swarming streets, walking in a sort of dreamy wonder, marveling at all I saw. I have passed into youth and manhood; gray streaks are among my brown hair—my cheeks are thin—there is care upon my brow. I criticise now, I weigh defects, I balance merits, I doubt, I argue, I arrive at logical conclusions; and yet, ever and anon, as to-day, the memory of some simple circumstances—some 'fair,' perhaps, or face, it may be—will steal like an old tune across my heart, smiting, as with another rod of Moses, the rock that was once my soul; and presently the hard granite will melt away with fervent heat, revealing the old perennial

waters of blessed childhood, the everlasting beautiful-ness of the time wherein my mother called me 'Dickey.' As I grew into my 'teens,' it wounded my precocity and pride, this childish name of 'Dickey.' I thought I was too big for it, and that when I put off my 'pin-afores' for 'round frocks,' I also ought to put off the childish name I have given for the manlier one of 'Richard.' I used to murmur in my heart sometimes at what I called the obstinacy of mother in adhering to the old name; but O, Sallie, what would I not give to-day if I could hear her low, sweet voice calling unto me as of yore? How I would leap at the blessed sound—how I would rush forward to meet her—how I would kneel to ask her blessing, and how tenderly and lovingly I would wait upon her steps as I led her slowly home!

RICHARD."

This letter was written at the close of the convention which pledged its members to death in a wild, heroic effort to overthrow slavery.

In August of 1856, Richard Realf determined on an act which shaped and colored all his after life, and which in its effects may be said to have wrought its graver discolorations also. It is easy to speculate on what might have come in the way of exalting and abiding literature if the young poet had moved in more sober and ordered ways; but we do know, however, that he nobly strove, often aided efficiently, was always the most resonant of voices, and that life became broader because of him, even if his own fell prone at last among the gruesome shadows by which his footsteps

were encompassed and sometimes misled. He decided to go to Kansas and take a man's part in a man's struggle—that of making a State free from slavery.

An interesting account of his appearance there comes to me from an old friend, and as it covers his movements quite fully, I insert it here:

“I shall never forget my first meeting with Richard Realf. It was during those stormy and eventful days when the question of slavery or freedom for a continent was being fought out on the plains of Kansas. The Missouri river was blockaded for the free-state settlers by the pro-slavery population along its banks. I had gathered a large part of young men to march overland through Iowa, to aid the free-state cause by votes, and if need be, with strong arms.

“It was in September, 1856, and our party had reached Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, by rail, and from thence were making ready for their long march of over 600 miles. Senator Harlan and Gov. Grimes came and gave us addresses of welcome, and words of cheer. Teams had been procured to carry the baggage of the men, and a supply of arms and ammunition to reenforce the little Spartan band which held the decisive point in the struggle for free soil. The train was about to start, when a young man, breathless, and with face flushed with heat, came running from the cars. He inquired for me, and presented a very kind letter from Mr. Pease, of the House of Industry, in New York, where the bearer had been a teacher. The indorsement was all that could be desired, but Realf hardly needed it. Suspicious as all were of spies and traitors in our camp, his soulful earnestness and noble devotion would have won all hearts to him. His splendid face was radiant with a

grand enthusiasm, and he was made welcome. He joined in the march, and walked with his comrades. He was in my own mess, and his especial pet was young Lagrange, of Wisconsin, since a famous soldier and public man, possessing a soul of the same chivalrous type, but more fortunately balanced in intellect. Realf was always ready to do his share of every disagreeable job. If the wagons stuck in the mud, or fuel was to be gathered for the camp, or a sick comrade needed care, he was always among the first to offer his help.

“He was brimful of a certain fiery energy, which seemed never to flag for a moment. He never showed nervousness or vexation. He was singularly tender and affectionate. At night, before we lay down, he always embraced Lagrange and myself. Poetry bubbled up from his heart like a perennial spring, as we lay looking up into the heavens of a clear night. He improvised, or recalled choice stanzas of his own, or of other poets. . . .

“Of Realf in Kansas I know little, as I never resided there. About a year following, on a visit to the territory, I found him still as exuberant in life and poetic fire as ever. I spent a night with a party on Mt. Oread, near Lawrence, in one of the forts erected to defend Lawrence from Sheriff Jones’ army of Missourians. Realf was of the party, also Cook and Kagi, who died with John Brown at Harper’s Ferry. Hinton also. Later the same year I met him in New York city, and visited the Five Points House of Industry with him. Every one there seemed to love him.

“Years passed and I heard from him only occasionally during and after the war. I met him again in 1874, while he was on the *Pittsburg Commercial*. Though time and trouble had left their marks upon him, there was

much to recall my old friend and comrade. There was the same undying love of liberty, and warm ready sympathy for the cause of the poor. He told me of his troubles, and I knew at times that he tried to drown sorrow in drink. He was, however, steady at his work. He had many mouths to feed, and all his modest earnings were spent for others.

“ In the winter of 1876, visiting Pittsburg, I found him in the Temperance work, heart and soul. Francis Murphy had made thirty thousand converts to temperance, and Realf was one of the brightest. He spoke with great power at the monster gatherings and continued steadfast after the meetings closed. He told me then that he felt the stirrings of a new spiritual life, and that he would enter the field as a lecturer. His life seemed only just fairly begun. I heard of his lectures in Ohio and of his visit to the Pacific Coast. The news of his death came to me in his last poem, sent by our mutual friend, Gen. Lagrange. Of him it might be truly said as of one before: ‘His sins which are many are forgiven him, for he loved much.’ ”

Realf arrived in Kansas in the middle of October, 1856. S. C. Pomeroy, James Redpath, S. F. Tappan, Preston B. Plumb, Edward Daniels of Wisconsin, Oscar Lagrange, afterward a Union general, the Rev. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Thaddeus Hyatt, and, if I recollect aright, Horace White also, were among the notable members of the northern emigrant “train.” He lived at Lawrence until he returned east with Thaddeus Hyatt in the early days of January, 1857. Coming back in April of the same year, he remained in the territory until he left to join John Brown in Iowa, early

in the following August. He never went back. During these months his life was one of ceaseless agitation and literary activity. He wrote while in Kansas at least twenty-five of his more notable lyrics, and to his three months' residence in the east is due nearly or quite a score of sonnets and love-lyrics of the purest tone and rhythmic melody.

It is not necessary to follow the months of waiting and drilling at Springdale, Iowa, where John Brown with his son Owen, nine Kansas men, and one man of color, prepared themselves for that strange overture to the Titanic struggle against chattel slavery that their captain inaugurated at Harper's Ferry, Va., October 17, 1859. It would take volumes to give the interesting details of the quaint and simple life in the Iowa Quaker settlement. The men drilled and read books of tactics and war. They held lyceum and had debates that made them famous on that lonely country-side. Everybody knew they were preparing to fight slavery, every one thought it was to be in Kansas and Missouri, and the idea that the free-state war was to be carried into the Virginian Dahomey was not known until later in 1859. The brothers, Edwin and Barclay Coppoc, left Springdale to join John Brown in Maryland. As Richard Realf's name has been at times in hasty and ignorant criticism attached to an anonymous letter sent in the fall of 1859, from Cincinnati, to Floyd, Secretary of War, declaring that John Brown designed to attack Harper's Ferry, the matter of actual

authorship may as well be cleared up here. Until within the past two years I have always charged the writing of the Floyd letter to a Mr. Edmund Babb, of Cincinnati. In this charge I have been mistaken, and have done Mr. Babb such injury as the accusation might bring, for which I hereby express my profound regret. A brother of the two Coppocs, who served with Captain Brown, published in an Iowa periodical (*The Midland Monthly*), October, 1895, his ungrounded suspicion that the warning letter was written by Realf. The statement was absurd on its face, however, but it had the good effect of bringing out the truth as to by whom and from what motives the letter was written. The former lieutenant governor of Iowa, Hon. B. F. Gue, told in the same periodical how he and his brother, David J. Gue, now of New York city, with a cousin, A. L. Smith, of Buffalo, were visiting Moses Sarney, the Quaker friend at whose house John Brown stayed in Springfield. This man of peace told the three persons named of the intention to invade Virginia, and expressed at the same time his conviction of absolute failure, bringing death to all concerned. The young men felt the same way, and in that spirit, hoping to prevent what they considered madness, they wrote two letters unsigned, one being mailed at Cincinnati, and the other at Philadelphia. Both were mailed at "Big Rock," Iowa, enclosed in envelopes addressed to the postmasters of the cities named. The Cincinnati letter was received. The writer of the letter was David J. Gue, now an artist and

portrait painter in New York city. After the letter was sent, the young men waited. Then came the blow at Harper's Ferry, and in common with all anti-slavery sympathizers they too rose to the measure of the issues created. Their well-meant effort was abortive, and on the whole they were not displeased that it should so be.

I shall not recite the story of John Brown, or of the Chatham Convention. It belongs to another volume, and would take up too much space in this memoir. Realf was one of the leading spirits. He sustained with fiery eloquence his captain's extreme views. Of John Brown's personal influence he once said: "He possessed that strange power which enables one man to impress many with his views, and he so psychologized his associates, that, seeing only through his medium of vision, they consequently were unable to controvert his theories; therefore the movement went blindly on. For myself, too, it is certain that had I not been to New York, where, out of reach of his great mesmeric power, I could in some sort master the questions involved, I should have been with the enterprise to the bitter end. I should, indeed, have had no other choice. Had John Brown sent a man on an errand to Hades he must have started hither, for Brown was one of God's own commanders."

Richard Realf was selected for secretary of state in the skeleton form of provisional constitution and government under which John Brown expected to control within slave territory, the slaves he was to make free

by fighting for and with them. When the Chatham Convention adjourned, the Browns, the father and the son Owen, Kagi, Cook, and Realf, with others, went to Cleveland, Ohio. It was there decided that the revolutionists separate for a brief period, and Realf determined, with Captain Brown's approval, to go first to New York, and thence to England, not only to see his people, but with voice and pen to endeavor to obtain means to aid the enterprise. To this end he wrote letters to George L. Stearns and others, who were sympathetic with Captain Brown's aims, though not knowing then his plan and place of attack. There is no word to be found during the thirty-seven years of my constant research into the movements of John Brown and his men, the result of which has been embodied in another volume of mine, that warrants such a statement as was made by a writer in the Springfield (Mass.) *Republican*, at the time of Realf's death, to the effect that his alleged "betrayal" of Captain Brown began at Cleveland, from where he was ordered to look after Hugh Forbes (as the newspaper critic states), an English drill-master, who was, owing to a disagreement, engaged in denouncing John Brown's purpose to the leading Republican politicians. Realf went to England with John Brown's consent. J. H. Kagi, who was named as secretary of war, and was slain during the fighting of October, 1859, wrote to me some time in June asking for news of Realf, and in that letter said they had had no word from him direct since he left to go to England with the captain's consent. Realf

said the change of his views, not as to the wrong and unrighteousness of slavery itself, but as to the "rightfulness" of the proposed method of assault, began with his reading for the first time Wayland's "Limitations of the Human Will." And this is probably the entire truth, for there is abundant evidence to show that he worked arduously, though with no great success, to earn money lecturing while in England; that he never denied personal hostility or objection to the existence of slavery in England, France, or in the South. Col. Thomas P. Ochiltree, the well-known Texan and New Yorker, when he was a youth himself, knew Realf during the summer and fall of 1859. He greatly admired the brilliant northerner, who openly spoke of his participation in the Kansas Free State strife and against the South. Col. Ochiltree has told the writer of many such incidents. Judge Paschall, by whose advice and action Realf was saved from mob violence, told me in Washington that the poet never denied his anti-slavery feelings.

Realf was in England and the Channel Islands from late in June till early in September. He then visited Paris and went thence to Havre, where he procured a cheap passage to the United States on a cotton ship bound for New Orleans. In this even he had apparently no other purpose than to get a chance to see slavery in its own lair, and work his way back to Kansas. He obtained reportorial work on *The Bee*, but in some way fell under the influence of Catholic friends. He went to Mobile

for study, and on the 3d of October was admitted to the Jesuit College at Spring Hill, where he was baptized as "John Richard." Among my memoranda I find the following notes, which were written a short time since by one who was with Realf at the college, and is now, or was at the time of writing, a prominent church dignitary. The note that accompanied these has been lost and I do not recall the name. But here is the statement. There are some errors in date as, for example, Realf was in England in July, 1859.

"About the first of July, 1859, Richard Realf came on a visit to the Jesuit fathers. He was at the college for about three months, was instructed and baptized, and, as my memory serves me, made his profession of faith, and was received into the church by Father Gaureist, then rector of the college, in the presence of the students assembled in the chapel for the customary daily mass. He left for New Orleans with the college boys on the Morgan steamship early in October. His verses were published in the New Orleans *Catholic Standard*, then edited by a Col. Denis."

When James Redpath began, with my aid as collaborator, "The Public Life of John Brown," Realf was believed by us to have died at sea. When later, as the last proofs were being read, Realf was arrested at Tyler, and garbled statements were wired north, Redpath wrote his preface thereon, and denounced Richard Realf as a "traitor." I combated that view, but it was of no use. Years after (1877) Redpath wrote to a lady in Ohio (at Xenia, I believe), replying to an inquiry,

and stating that his attack on Realf was unjust. He gave the explanation I have just made. Redpath's language in the book was as follows:

“The latest telegraphic news makes one correction necessary. I have spoken of Richard Realf as dead. I thought that he died a natural death on the ocean. It appears that he still lives in the body; but dead to honor, the voice of conscience, and the cries of the poor. He has chosen the part of Judas and promises to play it well.”

He then adds to Mrs. Ann Good's inquiry (the correspondence and name were all published in an Ohio paper from which I copy):

“You ask me why I used this language. Just as the preface was ready for the press, the news came that one of John Brown's men had been arrested in Alabama or Texas—or one of the Gulf States; that he had confessed his connection with the old hero, and had offered to betray all the secrets of the movement if he should be brought before the Congressional Committee; that his proposal had been accepted and that he was then on his way to Washington under military or semi-military escort. We all believed that Col. Realf had become a traitor. This belief caused me to write that assault on him. The book was printed before he gave his evidence.

“Examined by Mr. Jefferson Davis and Mr. Mason, of Virginia, while it is true that he told his story at great length, it is equally true that he did not betray any secrets that injured any one. I never read his evidence in full until after I wrote the preceding paragraph. I have just finished it, and write, therefore, with all the

facts fresh in my mind. But as long ago as 1872 I publicly retracted and apologized for the unjust charge that I had made against Col. Realf. You will find it in the edition of my book, published by Kinney Brothers at Sandusky, Ohio. . . .

“If a cloud has been cast across the path of Col. Realf by the error that I made years ago, and that I have not been fully able to atone for, I am not only willing, but anxious, that his friends should make any use that they see fit of this explicit retraction and apology.” . . .

The evidence Realf gave had no political importance. Its value is purely historical, linking, as it did, the struggle in Kansas with the attack on Harper's Ferry, and showing how both came to be.

When Realf reached Cleveland, Ohio, after the U. S. Senate Committee had discharged him, he had some \$600 in his possession, received as witness fees and mileage. In that city he met Barclay Coppoc and Osborne P. Anderson, two of those who escaped from the Virginia melée. He immediately divided his money by one half, thus enabling both to reach their homes and safety.

In quite a remarkable communication addressed to the editor (Mrs. H. F. M. Brown) of a Cleveland weekly of the period, after analyzing the conflicting conditions which went, in his judgment, to make up modern reform movements, he writes:

“I am afraid I have been somewhat indecorously amused at the various speculations of people in regard to my former connection with John Brown. One news-

paper (the Philadelphia *Ledger*) writes me down in a long editorial as 'quick, ardent, enthusiastic, able, earnest, truthful, sincere, utterly fearless of consequences, and with that sort of boundless faith in the goodness of others which inspires confidence and makes others good to him.' The Washington *States and Union* scolds me like a virago for having, it claims, made the government preserve my life from assassination, and transport me from Texas to the North, that I might in my testimony exculpate the Republican party from the Democratic charge of complicity with John Brown's raid. Redpath, the author of the old hero's biography, conceived an impression that I had sold myself to the South, and so attached an opprobrious epithet to my name. A Democratic organ in this city is mightily exercised because I have given a little money to a 'traitor' who escaped from Harper's Ferry; and men of both parties are greatly puzzled to know how it is that I can condemn Brown's insurrection, and yet vindicate his personal character, and make donations to those who were engaged with him in his enterprise. And thus I answer them all: O! Brother, O! Friend,—do not perplex yourself with perpetual prying into that which will not avail you. Is it not enough that you can not understand me, without unnecessarily vexing yourself with futile effort? Perhaps you are above me, perhaps below, or it may chance that, though afar off, we are equal. If I choose to balk your criticism and baffle your analysis, what is that to you? Look you, friend, I appeal from your customs, your rules, your measurements. I do not stand in awe of you. I will not seek to conciliate you. I will not pay you hypocritical attentions. I do not desire your suffrage. If I am noble, it will presently manifest itself; if I am base, I shall not always be able

to conceal it. If it can show itself in no other way, it will ooze out at my finger ends. This world is God's great whispering gallery. Speak we never so low, it roars like the thunder of an avalanche. Act we never so secretly, it blazes along the dark with insufferable blinding distinctness like lightning. Hide we away in places never so silent and far removed, the fiery finger will point us out, the inflexible pursuing voice will transfix us with the discerning words, 'Thou art the man.' It is most egregious folly to attempt to play hide and seek with our Maker. Wherefore, if I can neither lift an arm, nor raise a foot, nor utter the slightest word under my breath, without having it thrill upward and downward to the shining pillars of heaven and the ghastly pits of hell—if I am thus encompassed with unspeakable responsibilities and thus surrounded with unutterable grandeurs which flash in upon me through all the avenues of my being—if I have entered into a spiritual contract with God, to the performance of which I am pledged by all sweetness of peace and all sublimity of repose, and the failure of my duty wherein will involve me in consequences more perilous than hell—what is it to me if you can not gauge me with your personal standards? Why will you leave your politics, your merchandise, your money-making, only that you may grow vexed and petulant? If you are true, I am glad of it, for it is so much the better for you. But go your way, and leave me to go mine. If I wrong you, I am a fool; if you injure me, you are not the less so, for you thereby constitute yourself my abject debtor, and possess me with a lien upon your soul. Let us, therefore, be careful how we judge each other. . . ."

From the early part of February to the last of August, 1860, Realf is known to have been in Ohio. After leav-

ing Cleveland, he went to Columbus, making the acquaintance there, among others, of William D. Howells and John J. Piatt, who were both engaged on the leading Republican paper—the *State Journal*. He did some work for the paper while in the city. But he did not succeed in obtaining remunerative employment, and with the remains of the money paid him as witness fees and mileage, he started probably for Cincinnati, but, feeling worn with the mental strain he had undergone, went to the Shaker settlement, at Union Village, Warren Co., Ohio, to obtain rest and recuperation. A lady who afterward resided in Xenia, and nursed him through a severe sickness, writes of his stay in the village as follows:

“ He came to a village in Warren County, Ohio, in which I was living at the time. He wanted a comfortable place to rest, as he said he had just come out of the John Brown trouble with his life. So we took him into our house. In a few weeks he was taken very ill, and it fell to my lot to take care of him, which I gladly did, as he was so young and had not a relative in this country. He continued very ill for many weeks, and it was three months before he fully recovered. When convalescing, he took great pride in giving me a history of his life, which was, of course, very interesting to me. . . . Then he was engaged by the Believers to lecture or preach to them once a week for six months. It took him one week to prepare himself for the first of the course. The people advertised that such lectures would be delivered free to the public, and the hall was well filled. It was not long, however, before the fame of his

eloquence extended over the region. The press lauded him in high tones, and he continued to draw such crowds that hundreds could not gain admittance to the hall. As he proceeded with his course he grew more and more eloquent, until the religious body he spoke for declared he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. . . . I never missed one lecture during the six months. It was generally held as a delight to hear him, and, indeed, his whole chain of thought was full of purity, logic, pathos and eloquence." . . .

The secretary of the Believers community at Union Village, whose adherents are generally called Shakers, in reply to a communication from me, writes briefly:

"Richard Realf came to Union Village in March, 1860. He united and became a member of the society on the 22d day of April following. We have no record of the precise time he left the community, but we think he tarried with us about five months. A portion of the time he sustained the position of a public speaker, evincing much ability and talent, and by his oratory he attracted large audiences. His conduct while at Union was altogether unexceptionable."

When he left the community there was something like a religious revival in the air. The subjects of his discourses were such as : "The Hollowness of the World Life," "The Nobility of Sacrifice," "Purity in Life," and similar themes. The local papers referred to them as masterpieces of ethical philosophy and religious zeal. He grew restless, however; the beginnings of rebellion were in the winds; his own active nature craved broader life, and he was called to the lecture-field by the fame

of his "Shaker" speeches. Two lectures were delivered at Dayton, with great success and considerable pecuniary reward. Other lectures were delivered by him in Ohio cities and towns on poetry and anti-slavery topics.

It was at this period that his lecturing took him to Mac-a-Cheek, the home of Donn Piatt, then just returned from a not over-creditable diplomatic career in Paris. Realf was not in poverty at the time, but, on the contrary, must have been quite forehanded. I should not have referred to this meeting but for the fact that, several years after my friend's death, Donn Piatt gathered a handful of mire and flung it needlessly at his memory, by publication in a Chicago literary weekly of a story that the poet, a vagabond in appearance, shoeless and ragged, came to his residence with a note from some one known to him. Piatt stated that he entertained the wandering singer, loaned him \$600, and sent him on his way rejoicing, and had never heard directly from him since. There are several bits of internal evidence that tend to a natural disproof of this queer story. In the first place, no one who knew Donn Piatt, as I did for several years at a later period, would credit him with a specially generous disposition, or pick him out as a man likely to loan \$600 to a shoeless, ragged man, even if he were a gifted poet and orator. Secondly, Piatt himself was well known to be in pecuniary difficulties at that time. And thirdly, as already shown, Richard Realf was by no means an impecunious wanderer at the date Piatt gave—August, 1860. Realf's lectures at Dayton, Ohio, were delivered

that month, and they netted him over \$100 each. Besides he had other funds, including the amount received from the Believers. He lectured in Mac-a-Cheek also at that date, and would hardly have done so had he been in the state of vagabondage the romancing journalist afterward described. I find among Realf's papers of that period, and subsequently, mention several times of his having lent Donn Piatt \$600, which was never returned. He so informed Captain Rowland, with whom he enlisted, among others. Piatt was much abler at borrowing than was Realf, an' the possibilities are all in favor of the latter.

After the Mac-a-cheek incident, however, from about September, 1860, until about July, 1862, Realf disappeared from the public view. With all the efforts I have made it has been impossible to trace him for a single day during the twenty months intervening. He himself has said that a visit to England occurred; but his sister, Mrs. Whapham, declares that none of his family or their acquaintances know of such a visit. Only one poem of that period has reached me, and it is the one entitled "Apocalypse," and relates to the killing of Private Ladd of the Sixth Massachusetts in the streets of Baltimore, April 19th, 1861. Perhaps the Mac-a-cheek incident, whether it was borrowing or lending, may have been the immediate cause of this disappearance. At any rate, Realf's personality passed into the void, so far as I have been able to learn. The next appearance is at the beginning of his military life

in Chicago. Realf's enlistment is thus described by a former recruiting officer, Captain Charles Rowland, in a letter dated December 10, 1878:

"In the summer of 1862 I was seated in my recruiting office, in Chicago, when one morning there walked in a bright, trim-built, intelligent-looking little gentleman, and, saluting me with a pleasant 'good morning,' asked, 'You are raising recruits for the army, I suppose?' Answering in the affirmative, I asked him to take a seat. Upon doing so he commenced a conversation on general topics, the war, slavery, etc., which lasted probably half an hour. Ere he departed I asked him if he had any notion of entering my company, and said, if so, it would afford me exceeding pleasure to swear him in. He stated that not at that time could he answer my question, but would call again in a day or two. On the ensuing day he came again, and after another chat of, perhaps, an hour, he said:

" 'Captain, I am really much pleased with you, and am ready to be sworn in as a soldier.'

"Accordingly I administered the necessary oath. Of course, he had told me his name—a native of England. His age or vocation I do not remember. [He was then in his 29th year.]"

Captain Rowland mentions the disposal of some books and clothing, for which Realf would have no use as a soldier. The captain took his recruit to board with him, as they would be in the city for some weeks. As always, Realf's charming personality held those with whom he met. Captain Rowland writes: "I appeared to lift him out of sadness at times, for he often ran from

summer heat to zero in a few minutes." His poetic genius soon showed itself to his interested friend, and won, he writes, "my sympathy, and at last, I might say, my affection." He spoke of his early life in Brighton and Kansas, and soon confided to the captain his connection with John Brown, his life in Texas, arrest and removal to Washington, etc. Captain Rowland writes:

"I really fancy that Realf believed in the feasibility of the overthrow of slave government by the nucleus of men that John Brown fought with at Harper's Ferry. His imagination was, I was about to say, generally the master of his reason. His wish to gain an object induced him to believe it could readily be achieved; not studying about the necessary means to gain an end, he was ever liable to disappointment. But he possessed a gentle, child-like, confiding nature. There was a great deal of womanly sensibility mingled in his character. He was governed by quick impulses and too frequently was he deceived."

The two gentlemen were constant companions for several weeks, and the captain testifies that intimacy increased confidence on his part. Realf desired, however, to go to camp, and transportation was furnished him to Camp Butler, Springfield, Ill. Correspondence was maintained between the two friends. Realf had an opportunity of promotion at an early day, and Captain Rowland released him to enable his securing a warrant position in the 88th Illinois. He was made sergeant-major of the regiment, and thus placed in line for the adjutant's commission, which came a year later. The

regiment was soon ordered south, and at once saw active service in the famous Perryville and Stone River campaigns.

That Realf's military career was one of honor, courage, ability, and personal uprightness, can not be questioned. With his regiment, the 88th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, he served in the Fourth Army Corps throughout the war, under brigade and division commanders Stanley, Schofield, Sill, Lytle, Wood, and Sheridan, with Generals Rosecrans, Thomas, Grant, and Sherman, participating in all the grand series of military operations, from the march to and battles of Perryville and Murfreesboro or Stone River, the capture of Nashville, the massive campaign of 1863, which resulted in the occupation of Chattanooga, the great conflict on the Chickamauga field, the superb victory at Lookout Mountain and Mission Ridge, the severe winter campaign under Hooker for the relief of Knoxville, all the marching and fighting southward to Kingston, Georgia, preparatory to the great Atlanta campaign under Sherman, with the arduous work and fighting therein, until the capture of Atlanta brought him back to Chattanooga, temporarily invalided with bilious fever. He was actively employed thereafter at Chattanooga and Nashville, participating in the final close at the battle of Franklin, under Schofield, Stanley, and Wood, of the Confederate attack under Hood upon General George H. Thomas and his forces in the central south; at Nashville, Tenn., through the larger part of

1864 and 1865, until his departure north as a citizen, June 21st. In the latter year he served upon the staff of Brigadier-General John F. Miller, who afterward befriended him so warmly in California, and acted, by the poet's dying request, as his executor.

Occasionally, some one has written of the poet as a "soldier of fortune," or a "military adventurer." These caviling designations are absolutely inaccurate. Realf was a conscientious and self-convinced citizen of the United States, and therefore, when defense of the assailed Union led in his view directly toward the freedom from chattel slavery which he held to be essential to its safety, he was an honest and devoted soldier of its flag and unity. He was personally brave unto rashness, and won the high honor, for a subaltern, of being twice named in general corps and division orders for personal gallantry, once at Mission Ridge, where he carried the regimental colors forward under a heavy fire, the color-bearer having been shot down, thus rallying the line for a successful advance against rifle pits in front; and again at Franklin, where the Eighty-eighth Illinois bore the brunt of a great resistance. In Eddy's "Patriotism of Illinois" (page 210) the author says that the Eighty-eighth "bore a splendid part in the battles about Nashville, fighting Forest at Spring Hill, and on the thirtieth of October, 1864, reaching Franklin, where the Illinois regiment led in a remarkable charge." Col. Smith, Major Holden, and Adjutant Realf, one of the bravest of the brave

(writes Mr. Eddy), "were on horseback, not having had time to dismount, and so entirely exposed to the enemy's fire." He continues: "it was a desperate hand to hand fight, and both Generals Stanley and Wood, corps and division commanders, publicly and in person thanked the regiment and its field and staff officers by name, for the repulse of the rebel column, the safety of the Union army, and the victory of the day" (vol. 2, pp. 345-7). General Alexander McCook, corps commander, speaks of the Eighty-eighth as follows: "This fire, not in any way diminishing, I ordered the colors forward on the works, which a moment afterward were carried, and the stars and stripes waved triumphantly on Mission Ridge." The regimental adjutant was slain in this charge, and the poet sergeant-major won the vacant bar by carrying forward the flag.

In one of the many war letters placed at my disposal, Realf writes to a lady correspondent who wondered at him, an Englishman, being in the American army: "I hold that he alone is an American who is true to the idea of the American Republic. There are many alien natures born on these shores; many American hearts that drew breath beyond the seas. And I think that by and by among the many lessons we shall have to learn will be that our estimates of the basis of consanguinity, as well as nationality, are a good deal wide of the mark." In another letter he wrote that, born in the faith of Cromwell, and nurtured on the genius of John Milton, how could he be other than a

republican, and therefore a lover and defender of the Union assailed by slavery and secession.

All the Kansas comrades of the poet entered the Union army, or in a few cases, being physically unable so to do, served in the recruiting or other useful service. Several of them, like Realf, and this writer, were of English or European birth, but none the less were they most devoted Americans. And none of them are entitled to the flippant designation of "soldiers of fortune." The war letters of Richard Realf, as well as the annals of his modest but efficient service, prove how alive was his patriotism. Apart from their exquisite literary quality, these letters would prove in print an inspiration to citizenship. The poet's recognition of President Lincoln's policy and statesmanship, with his trenchant perception of the failure of others, as well as his scorn of those who plotted and hindered at home, are among the more notable expressions of soldier feeling. Elsewhere I have referred to the literary value of these letters, but I am by no means sure their civic significance and importance are not much greater. One of their delightful features is constant tribute to the character of his soldier comrades. In front of Atlanta, on the eighth of September, 1864, he wrote to his Michigan correspondent, Miss Jordan:

"Since I last wrote, what a grand consummation has been put to this Atlanta campaign! What an arduous time we had, filled with quick marches, rapid maneuvers, swift feints, and swifter strokes of purposes; and

how completely, intellectually considered, the inferiors of Sherman, were Johnston and Hood. Balked and baffled, blinded and misled, Hood was ever as an automaton in our great leader's hands. How glad I am it is at last over, and that our poor, tired boys will have an opportunity for rest and repose before the tug of war again comes. How brave they have been—how full of uncomplaining heroism and fortitude, none but they who have marched, fought, and suffered with them, can tell. We are apt to look back regretfully upon the olden times of chivalry, as though with the departure of those days the knightly spirit went out; but I can bear testimony to the fact that under the rough exterior of our Union braves there beat as loyal and kingly hearts as ever throbbed in Abelard or other knight, *sans peur et sans reproche*."

In an earlier letter to the same correspondent, he writes of his comrades:

"That we degenerate in politeness of speech and manner, that we grow somewhat abrupt and rude, is quite true; indeed, I do not see how this could well be otherwise, but these matters are by no means essentials, and do not concern the purity of the soul. Standing on these battle-heights, front to front with the dark mysteries of life and death, it is no marvel that we account of little value the slight veneering of conventional proprieties. But I repeat my heart's conviction when I say that, in all the attributes which form the basis of true manhood, courage, not of the flesh but of the soul—endurance, patience, fealty to conception of truth, and sometimes pity and tenderness softer than a woman's—the men in the armies of the Union will compare favorably with any selection of people that can be made."

The temptation is great to continue and amplify these extracts, but sufficient have been given to illustrate the spirit in which Richard Realf performed his duty as an armed American citizen. It was this devotion and courage that won for him the unanimous encomiums of his associates and superiors.

The most striking recognition is given in a letter to me. Under date of San Francisco, March 26, 1879, Gen. Miller writes of Realf's services on his staff at Nashville, of which city he was military commander, in part, as follows:

"Realf was aid on my staff at Nashville several months. He was very intelligent in the discharge of his duty, very punctual, and faithful, always on duty, earnest, industrious, sober, and discreet. I never heard a word of complaint concerning him in any respect while he served with me, and I certainly regarded him as an officer of rare attainments, faithful, efficient, and intelligent in the discharge of his duty. His private character during that time, so far as I knew, was above reproach. My command at Nashville was that known as military commander of a city, and it involved what might be termed civic military rule. The duties were very arduous, thousands of people came to my headquarters upon every conceivable errand and for almost every purpose, and these I had to deal with as well as to attend to my military duties as commander of troops. The civil authorities looked to the military for aid and support, and hence my duties brought me in contact with all officers of the civil government, I had a large staff, and among the officers was Realf, whose duty was to receive the visitors to headquarters in an anteroom,

ascertain their names and the nature of their business with the commander, give assistance to them in formulating requests, and admit them to the commander in such order and in such numbers as was considered proper; to give information to people who came to make inquiries of various sorts, in such cases as he was able to furnish the requisite information, etc., etc. These duties he discharged with such courtesy, intelligence, and tact, as to render valuable service not only to the commander but to the people, and I found it expedient to retain him in the place until he was mustered out of service. I knew of his literary ability before, but he made it more manifest while he was with me. He wrote several poems of merit during that time, one of which in particular I remember, for he read it to me one morning just after I came in. It was entitled the 'Joy Gun.' Mrs. Miller had seen in a newspaper the account of a negro who appeared at army headquarters in Fort Monroe, I believe, and asked the general in command to fire a joy gun, so that the company of poor, starved people whom this man had brought out of bondage, to within a mile or two of the fort, might hear the gun and know that they were near friends. She cut this out of the paper and giving it to me said, 'This is a fine subject for a poem; give it to Realf and tell him to write.' I did so, and he read the poem to me as above stated. He was very proud of it, and gave me a copy to present to Mrs. Miller.

"Realf was a favorite among the officers at Nashville, and was very popular with the people, for he treated all visitors with such urbanity and polite attention as to win their good opinion. He was especially kind to the poor people who came, manifested interest in their sufferings, listened to their tales of sorrow, and often came

in and personally stated their cases, and made their appeals as a friend to them with almost poetic eloquence. The rich and powerful who came found him respectful and polite, but not over sympathetic. Realf was the friend of the lowly, the ignorant and poor, and often their advocate. I was greatly pleased with Realf as an aide-de-camp, and believed him a sincere, earnest, patriotic man. He was never with me in battle."

With his mustering out of the Union army, there follow incidents and life chapters not so attractive, and the following of which is a painful duty indeed to this writer.

The marriages of Richard Realf have been much discussed. I use the plural, though legally there was but one marriage. The second ceremony was bigamous in character, and Realf had no knowledge whatever of his being free from the wholesome and honorable relation that he first entered upon. The third relationship entered upon after he had obtained from one State court a divorce from the woman he contracted marriage with at Rochester, New York, was, if any validity could attach, of the common-law order. His partner in this third union was the mother of children by him, and everywhere in his latter years he spoke of her as "my wife." His efforts, letters, and speech were burdened by his intense desire to take care of her and the children. These were triplets, all girls, and fortunately these have been adopted and well provided for. The son has grown to manhood and is spoken of as in every way worthy and upright. My

part just here is to tell the facts as to the real and first marriage.

Sophia Emery Graves was a native of Maine, born, I believe, in the neighborhood of Bangor. I have been informed, whether correctly or not I do not know, that there was some relationship through marriage with Hannibal Hamlin, once Senator and Vice-President of the United States. Her people were, however, fairly well-to-do Maine folks, and the young woman herself became a teacher and went west to a sister in Indiana, —Mrs. Furniss, of Furnissville, Porter County, about 40 miles east-by-south of Chicago. My knowledge of this marriage came first from the fact that at Realf's funeral, while the Grand Army escort was passing from Oakland, across the bay to San Francisco, a strange lady, looking upon the face of the dead, started in surprise and remarked to her escort, "Why, that's Captain Realf, whom I saw married." She said no more, and got out of the way, evidently desirous of avoiding public talk. Shortly afterward an article appeared in an Ohio paper denouncing the dead man as having been a bigamist. I could not trace this to any positive source, though strongly desirous of so doing, in order to learn the actual status of Catherine "Realf," *née* Casidy, the Pittsburg woman whose pursuit of Realf to California was the incentive to his suicide. The Reverend Alexander Clark, D.D., then Editor of *The Protestant Methodist Monthly*, now deceased, sent me a letter signed "S. Emery." The handwriting was fine and original,

and though it looked feminine, the contents implied that the writer was a man. If so, it must have been an army comrade of Realf's. I wrote to the address given and received a reply at once, the contents of which was somewhat startling. The writer stated her sex and claimed to be the lawful wife of my friend.

"I submit," she wrote from Springfield, Mass., under date of March 8, 1879, "a true statement of my relations to him reluctantly, for I would not add another dark chapter to his already too much blurred life. *I was his wife.* . . . The 88th Illinois—the regiment in which R. served—was formed in Chicago. The colonel (Chadbourn of Maine, formerly) of this regiment was a connection of mine, and many of the privates were young men or boys, who had been my pupils or neighbors in that small Western town where I then lived, and it was through my interest in the welfare of these soldiers that I became intimate with Realf. We were married in June, 1865. . . . R. remained with me until August or September, when, having received a commission in a colored regiment stationed 'south,' he proceeded thither, leaving me at the house of my brother-in-law, E. L. Furniss, in northern Indiana. It was intended that I should rejoin him speedily, but it became evident that the troops would soon be mustered out. I awaited his coming north again. His letters were frequent and full of plans for our future, of his literary ventures, and of his perils while investigating cases of outrages against the negroes. I received a letter dated Feb. 24, 1866, stating that the troops were to be immediately disbanded, and that he should be on his way home before I could have time to answer. That was the last letter I ever received from him, and I never

saw him again. Inquiries were made, but the officers who were with him during the winter only know that they left him at Vicksburg ready, as he told them, to come north or 'home.'"

Mrs. S. E. Graves-Realf states that the next time she heard of Realf was in the fall of the same year when Joel Benton published in *The Independent* a notable letter of the wanderer written to Humphrey Noyes, of the Oneida Community. She continues, in the letter I am quoting from:

"After reading these letters I determined that, if domestic ties were burdensome to him, he should never be annoyed or troubled by me. He might seek me if he chose, but I should never go to him. I knew that I had made a marriage that could only bring misery in some form or other, and I accepted the penalty without a murmur. After recovering from a serious illness that followed his desertion, I returned to my relatives in Maine and have lived a quiet, retired life with them ever since. Not many of my relatives or friends, so reticent have I been in regard to my marriage and desertion, knew that the Richard Realf of John Brown notoriety was in any way connected with my husband. When his poems or items in regard to him met my eyes I received a shock as if some long-lost friend had been suddenly recalled to mind, but when I saw the account of his untimely end I found I could still feel sorrow for the woes he had heaped upon himself by his reckless life, and for many weeks newspapers became a torture to me. I can not believe that he was as heedless of all moral or social laws as the reports, if true, prove him."

She then declares that, as the evidence of his bigamous marriage and other connections came to her, she re-adopted her mother's name of Emery and wrote to her friends to thus address her. Referring to the son that Realf left behind as a fruit of his last relationship, Mrs. Realf wrote: "I am interested in that child—where is he, and whom does he call mother?" Later she expressed a wish to adopt the boy, but, after a visit to Mrs. Whapham, concluded to withdraw entirely from all Realf connections—even ceasing any correspondence. In closing this first letter, the great-hearted woman writes anent a proposed biography that the writer should

"Touch lightly upon his marital enormities—if mentioned at all—for the sake of the child and of his aged parents. Had R. realized 'Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,' he would have left a brighter record behind him. . . . I would not deal harshly with his memory, for 'God and the angels know' alone what were his temptations, struggles, and atonements during his ill-starred life."

The greater part of his letters to Furnissville were destroyed with other papers on Mrs. Realf's recovery from the brain fever which marked her sweet young face and whitened to silver her sunny brown hair. I saw her but once, and she impressed me as both fine and fragile in body and mind. She died some three years ago. It was the desire to prevent renewal of pain to this lady as well as not to burden with reminiscent

sorrows and hindersome memories another, who was bravely and faithfully struggling out of false conditions—I refer to the mother of the Poet's children—that in great part is due the delay of years in fulfilling the obligation my friend's dying request laid upon me. If I could not help to raise his son by an early publication, I could at least hinder noisome discussion, which would have injured him seriously. With the death of the lawful Mrs. Realf, for whom there can be nothing but the sweetest of sympathy, and the passage of years laboriously occupied in gathering my friend's fugitive poems, and in tracing his erratic wanderings, I felt that the publication of poems and memoir could no longer be delayed. I am assured in conscience and judgment that its effect has on the whole been wise.

It remains necessary in completing this painful record to refer to the authenticated certificate of marriage, which document is in the safe of the publishers of this volume. It is not a question of scandal, nor one of punishment for one who made the life of my weak and unhappy friend most miserable, causing him finally to escape by the gate of suicide. That the woman, to escape whom Realf committed suicide, has no legal rights, the following is sufficient proof:

“No. ——— Be it known, that on the 9th day of June, 1865, the Clerk of the Porter Circuit Court issued a marriage license, of which the following is a true record, to-wit:



State of Indiana, Porter Co. 1858

"To any person requested by Law to administer Mar-
riages in said County

"You are hereby authorized to join together as Hus-
band and Wife, Richard Real and Sophie E. Graves,
according to the laws of the State of Indiana.

"In Testimony Whereof, I, W. J. Jones, Clerk of the
Circuit Court of said County, do hereby subscribe my
name and H. S. Cook, Sheriff of said Court, at my
office in Vandalia, Mo. at day of June, A.D. 1858.

W. J. Jones,

Clerk of the Circuit Court."

State of Indiana, Porter Co. 1858

"This certifies that _____ was a marriage of Richard
and Sophie E. Graves, in the
year 1858."

IN 1858

IN 1858

IN 1858

IN 1858

IN 1858

IN 1858

IN 1858

RICHARD REAL

filed with Recorder of said County at Vandalia, Mo. June 18, 1858.

State of Indiana, Porter Co. 1864

"I, William P. Brady, Clerk of the Circuit Court of said County of Porter, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full and correct copy
of the record, containing the marriage of Richard
Real and Sophie E. Graves, as the same is
recorded in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court
of said County.

"Witness my hand and seal at Vandalia, Mo.
(this) 10th day of January, A.D. 1864.

Wm. P. Brady,

Clerk of the Circuit Court."

1864



RICHARD REYGE



"State of Indiana, Porter Co., ss:

"To any person empowered by Law to solemnize Marriages in said County:

"You are hereby authorized to join together as Husband and Wife, Richard Realf and Sophie E. Graves, according to the laws of the State of Indiana.

"In Testimony Whereof, I, E. J. Jones, Clerk of the Circuit Court of said County, hereunto subscribe my name and (L. S.) affix the seal of said Court, at my office in Valpariaso, this 9th day of June, A.D., 1865.

E. J. JONES,
by H. W. Talcott, Deputy."

"State of Indiana, Porter Co., ss:

"This certifies that I joined in marriage as husband and wife, Richard Realf and Sophie E. Graves, on the 10th day of June, 1865.

H. H. MORGAN,
Pastor Cong. Church,
Mich. City."

"Filed and Recorded the 2d day of September, A.D., 1865. E. J. JONES, Clerk."

"State of Indiana, Porter County, ss:

"I, Rufus P. Wells, Clerk of the Circuit Court in the County of Porter and the State of Indiana, hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and complete copy of the record, marriage license, and certificate of marriage of Richard Realf and Sophia E. Graves, now of record in the office of the Clerk of the Porter Circuit Court.

"Witness my hand and the seal of said Court, this [L.S.] 7th day of October, A.D., 1879.

RUFUS P. WELLS,
Clerk of the Circuit Court."

There is little reason to doubt that on mustering out, March 20, 1866, at Vicksburg, Realf really intended to go direct to Furnissville and the home of his wife. Somewhere and somehow a fantastic impulse led to his abandonment of this purpose, and he went direct to Washington instead. In the many confidences I have had extended to me, and the kindly help that has often been unstintedly given in collecting the stray and widely dispersed poems, etc., of my friend, I have learned of many incidents that are liable to misinterpretation, not necessary to repeat or publish. There was, I doubt not, on Realf's part, an unwarranted fancy for a lady in the Federal City. She was an accomplished, graceful, and intellectual young woman, whom he became slightly acquainted with at a house he boarded in while waiting the fall before for his commission in the colored regiment, and there could never have been any warrant on her part for the passionate furore that appears to have possessed him. She had expressed an outspoken admiration of his genius as a poet. But Realf went to Washington in place of Indiana, and remained there a short time, when he left for the Cumberland Valley. He then proceeded to New York city. Between June and August there is no trace of his movements, but in the latter part of July he was known to have been taken sick of fever at French's Hotel, for a paragraph to that effect came under my eye at the Federal City. I came to New York soon afterward, for the purpose of finding him, but he had gone elsewhere. I believe John Swinton

found him at the time and comforted him with the glow of his true, warm friendship. The remarkable correspondence Realf had with the head of the Oneida Community belongs to this period and is interesting, although the poet never entered that community. The correspondence is too lengthy to reproduce in full, but, as it illustrates the strange processes of my friend's mentality, I give several of the letters, access to which I have had through the kindness of Theodore L. Pitt, Secretary of the Community. Realf's letter to the community, written from French's Hotel, New York, July 2, 1866, was as follows:

“President Perfectionist Association—Sir: I have the honor respectfully to apply for information respecting the nature, character of government, and conditions precedent for membership of the Perfectionist Society.

“Not being thoroughly informed upon these matters I trouble you with this communication to state

• “That, recently at Vicksburg, Miss., I learned from a former comrade in arms of the existence of your society. That I am 34 years of age, pretty well educated, that in various grades of private, non-commissioned officer, and officer, I served four years in the volunteer army of the Union, that I have in my possession the official proofs of this, besides the proofs of the recommendation of seven general officers, of my appointment to a First Lieutenancy in the regular army of the United States (from which my refusal to endorse the policy of President Johnson barred me), that I am an occasional contributor to the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Monthly* and *Weekly*, that since my muster out of service three months ago, I have resided near Vicksburg, Miss.,

that I came north partly on account of pecuniary losses sustained in consequence of the proscription to which loyal men are subjected, and partly for the purpose, if it were possible, of associating myself with your own or some other communistic society,

‘Far off from the clamor of liars, belied in the hubbub of lies,

Where each man walks with his head in a cloud of poisonous flies.’

“I arrived in this city this morning [Realf left Pennsylvania a month before] and I hasten to address you this brief note, trusting to elicit from your courtesy a reply to the request I have preferred, as well as a statement whether and under what circumstances I should be eligible for membership.

“I am quite poor, and unaccustomed to manual labor. I am willing, however, to overcome my ignorance, and I should not at all object to pay my board until I learned to make myself useful. If you give me the information sought for, and accord me permission to hold a personal interview, I will bring with me letters and papers corroborative of all the statements I have made. Please address me by next mail at French’s Hotel.

“Most respectfully,

“RICHARD REALF.”

A friendly response was written to this letter from Oneida, and as Mr. J. H. Noyes, the President and founder of the Oneida Community, was at that time in New York city, it was suggested that Mr. Realf call upon him.

On July 24, Realf wrote:

“Dear Sir: Acting upon your suggestion I have

called upon Mr. Noyes, and held a long conversation with him. . . . I propose to visit Oneida on Thursday, leaving New York on that day. I have read very carefully the pamphlets you were kind enough to send me, and I find the contents of one to be embodied in the 'Berean,' a copy of which I purchased from Mr. Noyes.

"I shall not come to Oneida with any purpose of being proselytized, or with any special predisposition towards you. If, as I think, judging from what my friend told me about you, and from what I learn through other sources, your life is the most Christ-like that is being lived—and if I can assimilate myself with you, not in special theoretical views, but on the fundamental basis of the soul—then I shall seek admittance to your community. Nor do I doubt your capacity to judge of the existence of such assimilation, if it shall exist. The eyes of the pure-minded see very clearly. Whoso is God-like, he hath something of the omniscience of God. . . . It is right before I come that I should relate to you, in brief, the history of my life. [He then states the main points of his career without comment.]

"But you must not judge that, as Mr. Noyes suggested, the adventurous and changeful character of the circumstances of my life indicate desire of change. I asked him to try whether he could not discover a spiritual unity of purpose underlying all these things; and I ask you to try and do the same thing.

"I shall, of course, be glad to answer any questions which may be asked me, and I have mentioned so much of what is personal to enable you the better to propound them. Briefly, during all my life, I have, as it were, been haunted with a voice as of heaven, compelling me upon the altars of sacrifice and renunciation. Often and often I have tried to stifle it; often and often I have vio-

lated its commands—tried to smother it, denied its validity, blasphemed its sanctity; but never could I escape it for all that. And because out in the world where people don't see God, for that He is out of physical sight, I can not live after the awful ideals which I can not escape; because out in the world the howl of the beast so often drowns out the song of the seraph within me; because the cares of it and the bitternesses of it make and keep me unclean; because, while alien from God and not in at-one-ment I perish in my soul until I am so related; because holding it true

‘ That men may rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things,’

I desire to die to all sin, and to become alive to all righteousness, and because I am well assured that those whom the Eternal Spirit has awakened from low and material delights to a state of spiritual holiness and intuition, constitute, as it were, a divine atmosphere for the reinvigoration of needy souls, therefore I propose to visit your Community, in the belief that if God sees it best for me I shall gravitate toward you, and that if not I shall at least have been strengthened and comforted.

“ Sincerely,

“ Theodore L. Pitt.

RICHARD REALF.”

On the same day that the above was written, Col. Realf wrote the following letter to Mr. Noyes:

“ French’s Hotel, New York, July 24, 1866.

“ Dear Sir: My time will be so occupied with business engagements during the remainder of my stay in New York city, that I fear I may not again be able to do myself the pleasure to call upon you. And lest I should not, I desire to thank you very sincerely for your good-

ness to me yesterday, and to add one or two words to the matter of our discourse. . . . Under all and running through all the changeful circumstances of my eventful life I have felt and heard—I have not always obeyed—the everlasting imperative, ‘Thou shalt work in well-doing,’ leaving me hardly any rest by day or by night, because I could not translate it into my conduct in the manner of a visible gospel of truth and love. The world is so very atheistic, the contagion of the world, of its selfishness and its jealousies, its mean passions and meaner aims, is so easy of acquisition, that it has sometimes—quite often—caused me to be worsted by the devil in the encounters which in common with all men I have had to undergo. But nevertheless I could not content myself to live after the outward semblance—I could not rest in the visible comfort—I wanted always to live in accord with the Invisible Truth, and very many times it seems to me that the struggle in my nature between the beast and the seraph, the flesh and the spirit, was greater than I could bear. It seemed sometimes as if ‘All his waves had gone over me,’ and as if there was nothing left for me to do but to die.

“Do you, indeed, doubt the existence of a certain class of souls that can not satisfy their natures with the common modes of life, in whom a hidden principle *drives* them, so to speak, to seek better and nobler modes of life, in whom the longing after the infinite predominates, and by whom all other ties must be loosened and sacrificed, if need be, to the growth and development of the soul? Do you, indeed, doubt that there are some in the world who, although alienated from God, would gladly submit to everything of suffering and privation if, thereby, they could be brought into a relationship of oneness with their Heavenly Parent?

“ But indeed, sir, there are such men and women, who neither by the wealth, nor the praises, nor the pleasures, nor the honors, nor the splendors and power of the world, can be satisfied; men and women who are bankrupt, finding not the peace of God. And are not such people of you and yours, whether *with* them or not? To die to sin and to live to righteousness, is not that your faith also? It is not necessary to pronounce any shibboleth to become one of you, is it? If I desire to be at one with Christ, so that His grace and love and purity may run through me like a channel, that is enough, is it not? And I believe that just in proportion as we are Christ-like we attain His infallibility of insight and judgment into the characters of men. I have no fears. Therefore, dear sir, I shall go to Oneida, making my proposed visit, trusting everything to the direction of the Higher Powers which have guided my life hitherto. If I (to use your own term) assimilate with you, I shall remain. If not, still do me the justice to believe that wherever I am and whatever I may do, I shall not cease to labor and pray that ‘ His will may be done on earth even as it is in Heaven;’ and so I am,

“ Gratefully your friend,

“ RICHARD REALF.”

The days passed, but Realf did not appear at Oneida. Nothing was heard from him till the middle of August, when he wrote that he had been very ill with typhoid fever, but still expressing his determination of visiting the Community.

The poet never went to Oneida, but Secretary Pitt says that, sometime in the following October, he received a letter, evidently from a woman, signed S. E.

Realf, and dated at Furnissville, Ind., making inquiries in regard to Col. Realf. From subsequent brief letters from her, it appears that she had received copies of the poet's letters to the Community. On recovering from his illness, Realf appears to have left New York city, probably intending to go to Oneida, but the army recruiting records show that he got no further than Rochester.

The private soldier soon began to electrify the literary people of Rochester by the publication of a number of poems, which attracted the attention of men like Rositer Johnson, who was then on the staff of the *Democrat*, of which the writer was the Washington correspondent. Mr. Johnson sought the poet's acquaintance, after having ascertained his identity with the authorship of contributions to magazines which had not escaped his vigilant, critical notice, only to find that he was a soldier who had just been ordered from the city. Of Realf's gravest fault and greater misfortune in the illegal marriage contracted there, Mr. Johnson knew nothing till years after his death. Catherine Cassidy and Richard Realf were married at the Church of the Trinity, Rochester, early in October, 1867. Realf himself never denied his folly in this matter, though he never acknowledged, except to his sister, some ten years later, the illegality of the act. It is not supposable that he believed himself to have then had another and living wife. There has been no direct evidence before me to prove that he even inquired as to the whereabouts, or of

the life or death of the lady, but there are many details which circumstantially go to show that somehow he learned of her severe illness from brain fever at Furnissville, after his disappearance in the spring of 1866.

Her departure from Indiana, and the change made in the spelling of her married, and later of her maiden name, might well have led to the conclusion from fugitive researches, that she was not living. In some exceedingly pathetic letters, he afterward wrote, when jealousy made his second companion a raging terror to him, that his Rochester marriage was contracted "during a prolonged debauch;" and to myself and Col. Samuel F. Tappen, his two oldest Kansas friends, he declared that he so acted "in a fit of mental aberration."

Realf was mustered out of the army at Fort Columbus, New York, and then became confidential clerk to Gen. Ingalls, Assistant Quartermaster-General, U. S. A. Like others of his always loving friends, I had lost personal trace of him until the accounts of a scandal appeared in the New York newspapers. Realf was charged by James Cassidy, of New York, with having on the 9th of February, 1869, stolen from him the sum of \$40. On this charge the poet was taken to the Tombs on February 13th, before Police Justice Hogan. He denied the theft, but admitted taking the money, as his own or as due to him from "the father of Catherine." He was discharged on his own recognizance, and, though indicted, the matter was never pressed to trial. Mr. W. B. Clarke, a former comrade of Realf's, made a thorough

inquiry, and, after sending a copy of the official record, declared that the charge was trumped up, as the result only of a marital quarrel. On the 18th, Realf was discharged, without trial, and after a plea of "not guilty" upon his verbal recognizance. It was just after this unfortunate affair that Realf left for South Carolina. He was driven in shame to this departure, as he had often been assailed violently in General Ingalls' office. The latter himself told me that these outbreaks often approached insanity. In South Carolina, as elsewhere, this woe-driven son of genius, made his presence felt at once. His arrival in that State was during the Reconstruction turmoil. The poet won political as well as personal friends at once. Whatever faults may be charged to Richard Realf, that of laziness is not one, for my personal knowledge and continued research prove him to have been ready for work at every opportunity. He wrote for the Republican State paper and also taught in a colored school at Graniteville. Everything was going smoothly till his fate again appeared. Then her violent "colorphobia" compelled him to give up the school. He had made himself felt as a Republican speaker. This he did at great risk, and the constant danger of personal violence which surrounded him at this time is shown in a letter, the first direct communication I had received from him for several years—sent to me at Washington, just after he had been appointed Assistant United States Assessor of Internal Revenue at Graniteville. In this letter, dated Graniteville, S. C.,

July 9, 1869, he recounted at length the dangers and difficulties of his position, and urged me as one he believed to be influential with the existing Republican administration, to aid him in getting transferred to some other locality and branch of the public service.

I tried to do what my friend wished, but failed through a technical difficulty—revenue appointments being purely local and not open to transfers. The next thing I heard was that Realf had been publicly derided in his own household, that some revenue money had been misappropriated, but not by him, and generally that his family circumstances were insupportable. Letters giving gross details are in my possession, and such Republican friends as the former chief of the South Carolina State police, who was living in San Francisco when I met him a few years since, have told me that these allegations were correct, the police official having himself made an inquiry. The small defalcation was made good by friends, but Realf could not be induced to return, having gone to Augusta, Georgia. He then left for the North, and the next known of him was by mention in the daily papers of Indianapolis, where his Nemesis had again found him. Scandal at once arose and Realf again disappeared. In December, 1869, he was heard of at Pittsburg, in a destitute condition. The temperance movement inaugurated by Francis Murphy was well under way, and Realf at once became one of its most shining converts. He was then befriended by gentlemen whose manly charity soon lifted him into usefulness and posi-

tion, affording him thereby six years of successful and attractive life—an oasis indeed, amid the bleak and blasted barrens of his desert years. The horrors of the six years preceding, even though he himself had woven the corroding meshes, are almost unendurable even to research, and perfectly unspeakable as to publicity of detail. What must they have been to him who suffered? At last, however, he stiffened against the fury that pursued. Yet when it appeared in Pittsburg, carrying an infant in arms, Realf believing, nay hoping, for a short period, that the babe might be, as was asserted, his own child, seriously designed taking up again his sad life-burden. This is shown by a letter written to a friend, the Rev. Dr. Hanna (now of Washington, D. C.), whose church he afterward joined. Becoming convinced, however, that the child had been obtained from an orphan asylum, and that its age forbade his being its father, he refused to care for the alleged mother. On her complaint of abandonment, he was arrested and incarcerated in the city jail. Through the efforts of the Reverend David Schindler and some other friends, Realf was soon released, and began again his temperance work. At this time he was the inmate of a Christian Home, and was a constant writer for *The Christian Radical*. The child alleged to be his soon died, and Realf steadily declined a renewal of marital life.

In 1872, when I was in Pittsburg on the occasion of a Union soldiers' and sailors' convention, for which Realf wrote one of his strongest lyrics, entitled "Rally,"

Mr. Brigham, editor-in-chief of the *Pittsburg Commercial*, the paper on which Realf served for five years as an editorial writer, described to me the way in which he was pursued by his fate. He told me of the interest Realf's story, and especially his eloquence, had aroused. He went to hear him one evening, and during the speech a woman created a disturbance. As Mr. Brigham watched Col. Realf, he became impressed with the conviction that a serious tragedy was impending. He felt that the outraged orator would, if no one intervened, soon do some desperate act. Realf once declared to me while in San Francisco that he would kill the woman and himself too if he was again followed. So the kindly-hearted, cool-headed editor secured an introduction and asked Realf to call and see him on the next morning. He promised and was on hand to a minute. Mr. Brigham at once asked if Realf wanted work. The editor was embarrassed when Realf looked at him in a dazed fashion, and then burst into tears. The result was his immediate employment at a fair salary, which was soon increased. Realf remained in that office until 1876, when the paper was merged with another. Mr. Brigham, now dead, told me after Realf's death that he both trusted and honored him, and never saw or personally heard of any loose or other unworthy conduct. He opened his own doors to his brilliant associate, and as he had daughters to care for and was a man of the strictest morality, the fact shows trust and esteem. Realf was unquestionably much esteemed by his profes-

sional associates. That six years was a harvest time of good endeavor and finished work. He lectured a good deal. His military poems gained him renown. He published largely and in most ways forged steadily to the front.

In September, 1872, Col. Realf applied for a divorce: the Rochester woman, having remained in Pittsburg, still caused him much annoyance. The case was heard before the Court of Common Pleas for Alleghany County, on the 14th of February, 1873, and decided in Realf's favor, the "jury having found the facts in complainant's bill to be true," and it was "ordered that said Richard Realf be divorced." The libellant was also ordered to "pay the cost of this proceeding," and the decree was made absolute. At this time Realf was in the fullest health and spirit, rejoicing over his freedom. His sister, Sarah Whapham, her husband and family, had come from England, and settled at farming at Bulger, Pennsylvania. He also planned a visit to his parents, which was carried out in the early summer. His letters to Mrs. Whapham and other friends during this period were joyous in tone and even boyish in spirit. He evidently enjoyed his visit to Buxton and elsewhere in England.

On his return, however, and arrival at Pittsburg, he was met by news that staggered and unmanned him. An appeal had been taken to the Supreme Court, and it, by a decree "*venire facia de novo*," ordered a reversal of the divorce. The Court declared that the specific

charges were not proven, and the Court allowed libellant to reopen the case. The result was a reversal of the verdict. Realf paid alimony until early in 1877, when he declared and proved his inability to do so any longer. His attorneys urged upon him to renew the application, declaring the setting aside to have been purely technical, and that they could readily re-win the suit. Realf refused to take any further action. When told of the reversal at his editorial desk, he fell in a syncope upon the floor and broke down utterly. His sister afterward said that her brother's sanity had, she feared, been affected ever since the decree was revoked. She added that insanity was "hereditary in the Realf family," mentioning that two brothers and two sisters of their mother had been so afflicted, one of the brothers being a suicide. Realf believed the woman to be his evil fate, and was all the time trying to make that conviction square with the nobler spiritual courage that he still possessed. It was at this time he wrote :

"We do not rightly seize the type of Socrates if we can ever forget he was the husband of Xantippe, nor of David if we can only think of him as the murderer of Uriah, nor Peter if we can simply remember that he denied the Master. Our vision is only blindness if we can never bring ourselves to see the possibilities of deep mystic aspirations behind the outer life of a man."

The loss of his editorial position hurt, and he was, by his own nerveless volition, soon in the toils of another

union, which renewed anger on the part of her from whom he was, like a blind man without a guiding sound or stick, aimlessly seeking to escape. Yet he sought in work to meet the new obligations that bore upon him. There was nothing of public moment, except his literary work, between 1873 and the spring of 1877. His brain and soul, however, seem to have become clarified. He published quite freely, writing among others at this time his striking poem of "Loyalty and Charity," the "Song of Pittsburg," and "Introspection and Retrospection," for the centennial celebration of 1876. Most of his deepest and purest sonnets, "Christdom," also "Symbolism," "Little Children," "My Slain," were of this period. And it is with these, and not the crawlings of the flesh, except as they influence or divert, that we are concerned.

The next step in his embittered life was made in a very sincere effort on his part to win a working place for himself and those then dependent upon him, as a lecturer on literary, ethical, and political questions. By the fall of 1877 he had launched out fairly as a lecturer. He carefully prepared addresses on "Temperance," he being then regarded as, next to Francis Murphy, the orator of the movement that bears the latter's name. In addition he had a famous war oration—"Battle Flashes;" one on the "Public Schools and their Freedom from Sectarian Control;" "John Brown," which was never written out in full; "Shakespeare;" "Poetry and Labor," and others. His addresses at Grand Army

posts and reunions, made chiefly in Pennsylvania and Ohio, were very popular. He was unfortunate in not being able to secure a good business manager, and in entering upon this field at a period of severe business depression. He was popular and well known all through Central and Northern Ohio, and in Western and Central Pennsylvania, yet the weary winter's work brought only disaster and ill health. He became the trusted friend of a Springfield family, and to the youngest daughter of this household I am indebted for the use of a series of letters, which, as John Morley wrote of Rousseau's letters to Therese, "are like one of the great master symphonies whose themes fall in strokes of melting pity upon the heart." The sincere friendship of this large-brained young woman, Mary P. Nimmo (now Mrs. Ballantyne, of Washington), evoked as sincere a regard on Realf's part. There are a large number of these letters written day by day, couched in the tones of a fond but sick brother. Evidently they were met in the same spirit. I give a few extracts. These letters cover several months of hard work, mental agony, and severe physical suffering, including internal hurts caused by a railway collision, and the affliction which, in the late winter and spring of 1877, produced almost complete blindness and long confinement in a New York hospital. Space does not permit the use of such copious extracts from these letters as both judgment and inclination would justify. I give, however, without date, (except to say that

they were written in October and November of 1876), some brief quotations:

“I am breaking down, and have a horrible racking cough. But that does not prevent me from remembering with delighted gratitude your own, your mother’s, and your sister’s manifold fragrant kindnesses. . . .
. . . How very greatly you mistake alike the facts and the desire, in your talk about ‘wealth.’ There is not a poorer man, so far as money is concerned, in the country, than myself. I live from hand to mouth. Is it any wonder that I am solicitous, and that my failing physical powers (I am paying the costs of my service during the war) make me very anxious regarding the possible future? I have never cared for money, except as it enabled me to help others. I wish I had. Even a fool’s forehead takes on a philosophic seeming when it is gilded with gold. I wish I might come to your quiet home and rest awhile. I hunger toward you, forgetting your youth and beauty, my age and decrepitude, and the impassable gulf between us, and only famishing for the touch of your hand, the sound of your voice, and the serene restfulness of your presence. I will surely come when I can, and as fast. So would any other starveling beggar, homeless amid a world of spiritual homes. Don’t mind my words. . . . I think I should like to go to bed and sleep a whole week, and then awake in the everlastingness. I am tired! It is not the outward winter, dear friend, that is bleak, it is the inward dreariness.” . . .

In 1876, removed to the Pacific Coast, and so, for the time being, lost track of Realf’s movements. I knew that he had lost his editorial position, but thought him fairly successful in the lecture field, until a pathetic

letter reached me, exposing his woful condition. I at once made an effort to aid him. There were several old Kansas friends on the coast, among them being Col. Samuel F. Tappan, who was a close personal friend; Henry Villard had also met Realf and was ready to help with transportation; Col. Alexander T. Hawes, a leading insurance man of San Francisco, was an old Kansas friend, and ready to help. The writer owes sincere thanks to this gentleman, for his own as well as Realf's sake and name. Ex-General John F. Miller, on whose staff Col. Realf had served, expressed earnest sympathy and was most helpful, warranting the statement also that he would see to his ex-staff officer's employment after his arrival in San Francisco. So with the aid of Mr. Villard, Hon. Russell Errett, and Senator John P. Jones, transportation was procured from New York to Ogden, at which place I was enabled to have him furnished for the trip to the coast. A small purse was also filled.

In this sad stress the helpful friend in New York proved to be Rossiter Johnson, and he has remained so through all the years that have followed. Before receiving Realf's letter, on seeing a statement that the wife of a literary man named Realf had become the mother of triplets and was in distress, Mr. Johnson made an energetic effort to find out if she was related to the poet he admired, and, having done so, proceeded to do what he might to lift her burdens a little. The boy Richard was cared for at the Child's Hospital,

where, however, he contracted a disease of the eyes, which, soon after, his father took from him, and was thereby soon prostrated almost to the verge of blindness. The mother was cared for at the Homeopathic Hospital on Ward's Island. The girl children were soon afterward adopted by a lady of means. Realf himself was admitted to the New York Ophthalmic Hospital. His pathetic, broken, yet still hopeful, spirited letters to Mr. Johnson show his condition, mental and material, at the time much more forcibly than other words can do. In one letter, dated May 13, he wrote:

"I think I can give, some day, under favorable conditions, some interesting reminiscences of great Englishmen and women. And perhaps I may, if I live long enough, write my autobiography. . . . I am walking the edges of the abysses. I hope God will bring us through the stress safely. I have erred greatly in my life, and suffered greatly, but I have always been a servant and never a hireling of the truth."

Later he wrote again to Mr. Johnson:

"I thank you very deeply for all your goodness. But you can judge how impossible it has been for me, in this culminative stress, to do any worthy work. Sometimes I fear I am losing my grip on myself. Do you know of anybody in the city who would give one a hundred or a hundred and fifty dollars cash down for the sole right and title to all I may have written? If I could get a hundred and fifty dollars for my verses, I would send L—— (his wife) to a hospital, and take for myself a second-class ticket to San Francisco. . . .

"I will tell you, when I see you, of the reasons why

I am so desirous to get far away, far away. They are not base ones; but I shall never be able to do that of which I am capable in the East,—at least, not until a certain person dies; and you know it is written that ‘the good die first.’ Out in San Francisco I can find work, and recover my poise.”

Under date of May 23, 1877, he wrote to Miss Nimmo, at Springfield, Ohio:

“I have suffered excruciating tortures. I never thought I should be so poor, and helpless, and sightless, but it is God’s will; God’s will be done.”

On the 24th he wrote:

“I beg your pardon for troubling you. It may be the last time. I can not tell. I can not see a word of that which I write. I can barely distinguish the black marks. I am in so desperate a strait as to humble my pride enough to say that I would be very grateful if the friends of temperance in Springfield, who remember me with any interest, would, in view of my affliction, (I am almost totally blind—entirely so so far as reading is concerned) of the fact that I am at the end of my scanty resources, and that this is not a free hospital, contribute a little purse toward the alleviation of my present pressing needs. I do not mind thus unbaring my bosom to you, but I should not like it to be known to any one else that the suggestion came from me.”

Richard Realf arrived in San Francisco during the first week of July, 1878. He resided there less than four months, before taking his own life at Oakland, on the 28th of October following. The friends who wel-

comed him on his arrival were shocked at his physical weakness. He was feeble in step and evidently had barely recovered from a struggle for mere existence. His voice, always musical in tone, now ran habitually on a minor key, vibrant with a deep sadness. His still abundant hair was almost white, and the face was worn and lined with suffering. It was apparent at once that he was unfit, temporarily at least, for work of any kind, though his anxiety therefor was feverishly eager. He was made comfortable, and, a few days afterward, Gen. Miller took him to the Napa Valley, and made him his guest on a beautiful ranch the family owned there. Had Realf so chosen, the General would have been glad to have made for him a permanent abode thereon, and, indeed, the offer of a sort of stewardship, or at least bookkeeper with residence, was made. But Realf's original design of writing and lecturing had the strongest hold. He was, above all else, desirous of bringing his boy and the mother, of whom he always spoke with ardent affection, to San Francisco as speedily as possible. To that end he urged an application for a clerkship in the U. S. Mint, of which another Kansas friend, General Lagrange, was then superintendent. There was no vacancy, but the promise of appointment at the first opportunity was made, and the Colonel was offered a place temporarily on the laborers' roll, in the melting and coining room. He did not hesitate a moment. As a matter of fact he was unfit for this work, but, half blind, worn from recent illness, suffering too from

chronic attacks of rheumatism and other results of army service, he still persisted. His work was carrying the molten gold from furnace to coining machine and tables. Once he stumbled and was severely burned. I write of this because there was always something stalwart in Realf's determination to care for himself, and in the reticence also which prevented his warmest friends from fully knowing of his conditions and circumstances. His pay was small, not, I believe, over \$60 per month. He lived economically and constantly sent small sums to New York for those he had left behind.

His presence soon attracted attention. The city newspapers mentioned him in pleasant terms, and these notices were referred to by Eastern papers. In this way his new residence, unfortunately, became known to the one person he desired to avoid, together with, in all probability, an exaggerated idea of his well-doing. Personally I became aware of her watchfulness by the receipt of an insolent letter, signed by the name of "Holmes," certainly a person wholly unknown to me, in which I was berated for inducing a man to desert his wife; the reference, of course, being to Richard Realf, and the person who, at Pittsburg, claimed to bear his name. Naturally angered at such a missive, for I had but the merest shadow of knowledge of my friend's troubles, I showed the letter on his return to the city from the Napa Valley, and asked for an explanation. This was given at once, and his position proven by the production of the original divorce papers and many newspaper ex-

tracts, showing the pursuit and persecution to which he had been subjected. The point of this explanation lay in the fact of a very deliberately expressed determination on his part to commit suicide, and perhaps kill the woman herself, if she followed him to San Francisco.

At this time Realf was making good progress toward health and something of prosperity. Some of his poems were printed in the San Francisco *Evening Post*, and a larger number in *The Argonaut*, the most attractive California weekly, of which Frank M. Pixley was then the editor. If he had not worked so hard physically—for he was unfit for drudgery of any sort—and had taken General Miller's offer, Richard Realf would have regained his health, and with it that mental courage and spiritual balance against which even his pursuer could not have prevailed.

Arriving in San Francisco on the 26th of October, 1878, in some way she had obtained his address with a family named Mead, on Mission Street, quite near the mint. Realf was at his work when she arrived. As he had often spoken of his "wife" and her possible arrival, the landlady had no hesitation in admitting the person who claimed that title, stating she had just come from the East. In the newspaper account it was stated that she proceeded to an immediate search of Realf's belongings, turning out his clothing, examining, seizing, or destroying papers. She was found at this work when the worn and tired man returned to his lodgings. What occurred or was said can only be surmised. They

remained in conversation for some time, and she was heard to ask him to remain, but he refused, and requested her to walk with him. This she did and they soon after parted. After leaving her, he went to the rooms of a friend named Pomeroy, remained there until late, and on leaving borrowed a small sum. He made an effort on Sunday to find me, and hunted up other friends. I was in Nevada. The accounts of his proceedings on Sunday are confusing, but it is known that he purchased a small quantity of laudanum and chloral hydrate. On Monday he did not appear at the mint and sent no excuse. The *Oakland Times* of October 30, gives the following brief account of his ending:

“Monday morning, about half-past eight o'clock, a gentleman called at the Winsor House and inquired of the proprietor, Mr. Wheeler, for Col. S. F. Tappan. On being informed that the latter gentleman had just taken the train for San Francisco, he requested a room, saying he would wait Col. Tappan's return. After taking breakfast, he retired to his room, but soon returned and requested paper and envelopes, saying he desired to write. Shortly after he was seen to come down stairs and walk out into the street. He was gone for some time, but returned and once more went to his room. In the evening, about a quarter before seven o'clock, Mr. Wheeler knocked at his door, for the purpose of informing him that the dinner hour was almost over. Receiving no response, he went in and found the occupant apparently asleep. Speaking quite loudly, Mr. Wheeler told him that the dinner hour was almost past; also, that Col. Tappan had returned, and asked him if he

wished to see him. He partially arose from the bed and replied that he did, whereupon Mr. Wheeler left the room. As he did not afterward appear, Col. Tappan concluded that he was sleeping, and refrained from visiting his room till morning.

“The gentleman had registered as Richard Realf. Not desiring to disturb his rest, Col. Tappan did not see him that night. The next morning, however, he went to Realf’s room and knocked. No response being made, he entered, and there, with features as calm as if he had not yet aroused from his sleep, Richard Realf lay cold in death. Dr. L. M. Buck was immediately summoned, but Realf had too surely accomplished his aim. On the table were two bottles, one labeled ‘Chloral Hydrate’ and the other ‘Laudanum,’ both emptied of their contents. An inquest was held, and from the testimony there elicited, it appeared that Realf had been driven to his death by troubles of a domestic nature. Two letters which he wrote on the day before his death, directed to Col. Tappan, were produced for the jury’s perusal, but as they were strictly private and confidential they were not allowed to be made public. The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the facts educed, showing that he had taken laudanum with suicidal intent.”

His friend Tappan had not, like myself, been intrusted with the facts and haunting fear that followed Realf, and so was not on the alert over his somewhat strange conduct at the hotel. In a letter written after the death, Col. Tappan says:

“He came to my room at the Winsor early one morning after I had left for San Francisco; it being steamer day, I went over much earlier than usual. On my return

in the evening he was sleeping, and I concluded not to wake him, but left word at the office to call if Realf asked for me. From what the landlord told me I supposed Realf had been on a 'spree' and I thought he did not care to see me until all right again. Late the servant called and said Realf wanted 'John.' I told him to go to Realf and come for me if I was wanted. I heard nothing more. In the morning I went to his bedroom and found him dead and cold, leaving addressed to me a poem and a note explaining why he had destroyed himself. 'A woman in the case.' The poem was published at the time. My not seeing him the evening before was a fatal error, and I shall always regret it, for had I done so all would have been well; but a strange fatality followed him. Everything seemed to conspire against him. I found he had purchased at two different drug stores poisons, deadly when combined, otherwise considered not dangerous. He evidently knew just what was needed and how to get them without exciting alarm. You know the rest better than I can tell it."

Col. Realf left by his bedside a poem in sonnet form, which has been republished wherever the English tongue is printed and spoken. He also left the testamentary paper of which I give the essential parts, with another personal letter addressed to Col. Tappan. The will is as follows:

"Oakland, Cal., Oct. 28, 1878.

"I, Richard Realf, poet, orator, journalist, workman, do hereby declare that I have deliberately accepted suicide as the only final relief from the incessant persecu-

tions of my divorced wife. . . . My poems and the MS. of certain lectures to be found scattered promiscuously in my room, on the table, and in my trunk, are to be put in the possession of Gen. John F. Miller, who at his discretion will, or will not, surrender them to Col. R. J. Hinton, of the *Post*. . . . But . . . she . . . who once bore my name, and who is now in San Francisco, must on no account be informed of the residence of my wife, who would be in constant danger. . . . Now, God bless all, God pardon me as I pardon all. I love Gen. John F. Miller, Col. Tappan, Col. Hinton, Mr. Mariner Kent, John Finigan, E. Levy, Col. J. J. Lyon, and many others.

"There is, or should be, a tied lock of hair in the form of a rude bracelet, lying on the bathroom window sill of my boarding house. I should be glad to have it placed around my wrist.

RICHARD REALF."

The essential portions of the letter addressed to Col. Tappan are given as follows:

"Oakland, Cal., Oct. 28, 1878.

"On Saturday night she broke in on me at San Francisco. I left the house, of course, but last night I went back after taking a dose of chloral hydrate large enough, I vainly thought, to give me permanent rest, and I left this morning before they were up, and have spent my last penny in purchasing some laudanum and more chloral that I shall use when I have finished this note. I desired to see you to make arrangements for repayment of my indebtedness to you. I can not compute what the mint owes me—my poor brain is in a whirl—but I know that I drew \$20 in advance in the beginning of the month."

Realf then stated some small sums that he was owing, gives Col. Tappan authority to draw the balance of his month's pay at the mint to settle these, and proceeds:

"Please take charge of all my books, papers, MSS., and so forth, [Col. Tappan was spared that task, as the person from whom Realf fled had seized them immediately upon being admitted to his room by the landlady]; until Gen. Miller comes to the city. Then consult with him. There should be some money in my poems, etc., if published in book form. I have a dearly beloved one . . . whose address is to be kept *sacredly private* from all eyes save Col. Hinton's and Gen. Miller's. My death will almost kill her, and my precious boy, but I am utterly incapable of bearing more suffering. I wish some means could be devised of sending her a little money. I had hoped to have gotten her out here within a month. . . . On no account is the person calling herself my wife to be permitted to approach my remains. I should quiver with horror, even in my death, at her touch.

"I have had heavy burdens to bear, such as have set stronger men than I reeling into hell. I have tried to bear them like a man, but can endure no more. If I am weak and selfish, God will forgive me. Write to Gen. Miller at Sacramento and tell him how greatly I loved him. Col. Hinton is in Nevada with Senator Jones. I die in peace with all mankind and asking forgiveness for my own manifold trespasses. . . I do not speak of my love for my parents and kindred. It is too sacred. Good-by. God bless you."

There remains but little more to be said. He was buried on the 31st of October, the services being conducted by the Grand Army comrades of Oakland and

San Francisco. The Rev. J. K. Noble, Chaplain, officiated. Col. J. J. Lyon, his personal friend, read the poet's "Swan Song," "*De mortuis nisi nil bonum.*" The remains were interred in one of the highest portions of the Lone Mountain Cemetery, overlooking and embracing the Golden Gate and Bay of San Francisco. The poet's injunction to "plant daisies at his head and at his feet," was not forgotten, for a little maid of fourteen, Miss Daisy Trueheart, was selected to meet that wish. After the planting of the daisies a dirge was played, and the death volleys fired above the grave of the poet—my beloved friend—Richard Realf, who at the time of his death was just forty-four years, four months, and thirteen days old.

The Pittsburg "pursuer" remained in San Francisco for about a month. During that time, claiming her means to be exhausted, certain poems and manuscripts were offered for sale. Gen. John F. Miller, then in attendance on the State Constitutional Convention, in session at Sacramento, asked Mr. Pixley, of *The Argonaut*, to negotiate in his own name for the purchase of such material as she had in possession. This Mr. Pixley did, finally offering and paying \$100, taking Catherine's receipt. General Miller refunded this amount to the editor. As a matter of fact, however, the material purchased was only in part surrendered, and a large scrap book containing some thirty poems, with the printed report of his finest lecture, "Battle Flashes," are still at Pittsburg. As will be seen in this volume I have

collected, with some that are not included, about two hundred poems. I know of but one literary friend and admirer of Richard Realf, George S. Cothman, of Irvington, Indiana, who has seen her material. With perhaps two exceptions, I know it is not important, as copies of every poem but one are in my possession. The sale took place, and the material obtained, such as it was, was turned over to me.

The effort to collect Realf's poems and other material relating to him has been a task involving almost unremitting labor and patience during the past score of years, and it has not even yet been fully accomplished. My unfortunate friend left nothing like a personal collection. What was obtained from the "seizure" made at San Francisco, in October, 1878, by her to escape whose pursuit Realf committed suicide, were in the worst possible condition. He had published, however, in *The Argonaut*, during the few months of his residence on the Pacific Coast, a number of his more exquisite sonnets and lyrics; none, I think, except "My Lady at the Window" and a portion of "Death and Desolation," being new at the date of publication, but all having been rewritten and more exquisitely finished, as careful comparison shows. I have adopted *The Argonaut* versions as far as they go, and they include "Love Makes all Things Musical," and several sonnets selected from "Symbolism" and "Christdom," which in their complete form were first published in *Harper's*, *The Atlantic*, *Scribner's*, and *The Independent*. The por-

tion of "Death and Desolation" referred to was printed the week preceding the author's suicide, and with the third one of the famous triplet of sonnets, found by the side of his deathbed, the lines are without doubt the last from his melodious pen and in-seeing soul. I have found no previous issue of or reference to "My Lady at the Window," and hence have reasonably concluded that *The Argonaut* print is the first publication. It may not be, for the poet, in his impecunious wanderings and struggles, was often impelled by dire necessity to doubtful procedure in the re-writing of his poems and the disposing of them again. It is probable that the failure of William Cullen Bryant to take any notice of the strangely pathetic appeal Realf addressed to him early in 1878 may have been due to the fact that as editor of the New York *Evening Post* he found that the poet had formerly sent it two or three poems previously published, doubtless receiving pay for the same. Besides *The Argonaut*, the original publications in *Harper's Monthly* and *Weekly*, *The Atlantic*, *Scribner's*, *The Independent*, and *Christian Union*, with the consent of their publishers, have been drawn upon for copy. But the larger number of republications, and the wide reach of the same, has made the editorial labor of gathering, comparison and revision, a difficult task.

There are two small MS. volumes in my possession, one prepared by the poet for his sister Sarah, and the other for a friend of his earliest New York days. None

of the poems they contain were written later than 1857, and all apparently were composed between the spring of that year and the early months of 1855. There are a few duplications in both volumes, and the number of poems and sonnets in both is some fifty in all. I have learned of another and larger volume prepared in South Carolina in 1869, but have never been able to see it. This manuscript was at one time in possession of Realf's Nemesis, who is reported to have torn and mutilated it. Several poems are apparently lost by this process, but the rest have been traced and are embraced in this volume.

The boyhood poems of Realf, so prematurely published in 1853, when the poet was in his seventeenth year, are not, with two exceptions, included in the present collection. The two referred to are entitled "Nobility" and "A Man to His Word," and they were selected as the most mature and musical. There are several in "Guesses of the Beautiful," which seem the foundation for later poems. One, entitled "The Sword Song," being a plea for peace, is the reverse in expression of the martial lyric which so vigorously touched the tenor note of war. Yet there are lines in the boy's production that indicate the spirit which animates the war lyric. Realf's poetic nature, like the genius of Rousseau, was, as John Morley so admirably puts it, of the "kind in which the elements of character remain mute, futile and dispersive particles, until compelled into unity by the creative shock of feminine influences." Realf

felt this more than Jean Jacques did, in its most agreeable form. Far more than by his faults or follies, must the influence of woman upon him be judged. I have been in possession of hundreds of his letters. In no one of them have I ever seen an unclean word or unwholesome suggestion. A pathetic tenderness is a prevailing and purely personal trait. The passional expression, whenever perceptible, is held in restraint by the cleanest of poetic illustration. He certainly had the plaitonic faculty in a large degree. Children all loved him. Old persons were drawn strongly to his side. Virile men were all kind to him, and no women, but one, has spoken of his memory otherwise.

If the genius of the poet is to be counted as the real "me" of Richard Realf, then it must be acknowledged, and without stint, that he nobly bore all the woe-degrading consequences of his weakling acts. For it is certain that as his daily and objective life became more and more subject to a savage pursuit and fierce jealousy, the soul of the singer rose to nobler and loftier height of expression, to more esoteric vision, and went down to more sacred depths of feeling.

The poems of 1854 and of the early winter of 1855, that are preserved, are nearly all of an affectionate nature, called forth by gratitude and friendship, or the feeling his departure for America aroused. After his arrival in New York and direct residence in the Five Points House of Industry, the love-nature manifested itself in broad human expression. In this period of

about eighteen months are found such poems as "The Outcast," "Mother Love," "Magdalena," "The Seamstress," and others that show the influence of Hood and Mackey, yet rise rapidly to power and originality that are all his own. The first poem published in America was one addressed "To England." It is a piece of fierce objurgation and invective on the French Alliance and the Crimean War. It is written in the resonant and heroic Alexandrian measure, and attracted wide attention. Most of the poems published by Realf during his work and residence in the Five Points House were printed in the pages of the New York *Mirror*, a literary weekly edited by Hiram Fuller. These include the poems called forth by the peculiar influences of his daily work, and by the dawn of a new passion which had much to do with fusing and molding his immediate future. The "H. B." or "Harriet," to whom several sonnets and exquisite lyrics are addressed, was the brilliant daughter of a family quite famous in the anti-slavery agitation. She was, I am informed, a niece of Charles Burleigh. The poem "I Remember," afterwards re-written and published at Pittsburg in the early seventies, was of this episode. Another one entitled "Two," was originally written at this time, but as re-written and addressed belongs naturally to the closing year of his life, and marks his apprehension of the purity and fidelity of one of the sweetest friendships with which even he was endowed.

Realf wrote also a considerable amount of prose mat-

ter, generally in connection with the reform work of the Rev. Mr. Pease. I have not made strenuous endeavor to collect such materials, for his prose writings are even more widely scattered than his poems were. He prepared and delivered some lectures. One on "Poetry and Labor" attracted attention, and through it I first met the poet, being at the time Vice-President of a Young Men's Temperance and Literary Club, which met weekly in Botanic Hall, New York, as I have already mentioned. I was commissioned during the late fall of 1855 to ask Realf to deliver this lecture, and the interview that arose there began an intimacy which continued till Realf's death. It has been continued ever since, and even more intimately on my part, as I have for eighteen years past continuously followed the sad footsteps and deeply shadowed life of my gifted friend.

A notable example of Realf's intellectual growth is seen in the poem which closes the collection—"We all do carve our statues evermore." It was written for and delivered as a commencement address at an academy, Warnersville, New York, in June, 1855. My copy came from the manuscript volume of a Dr. Smith, of New York City and Elberon, New Jersey.

In Kansas, his arrival early in October, 1856, was immediately marked by the writing of the "Defense of Lawrence," a forceful lyric, which at once, from its melodiousness and vivid, original illustrations, as well historical significance, attracted attention. It has remained one of the favorites with Realf's admirers.

The poet left Kansas for New York, in January, 1857, and remained in the East until the last of April. During the winter months of 1857 his muse was prolific. Among the finer sonnets of the period that have been preserved are the two, "In Peril," addressed to Mrs. Hyatt; two under the title of "Passion" and "Silence," afterward re-written; "In a Scrap Book," and to his artist, Frank B. Carpenter; others to "An English Friend," to "Mrs. M ——" two to "Miss H — B.," one to "Thaddeus Hyatt." Of the same period will be found the vigorous descriptive poem illustrating the Inauguration of James Buchanan, March 4th, 1857.

Under the title of "Free State Lyrics," Realf wrote and sent to Kansas from New York a series of seven vigorous anti-slavery poems. There are also a couple of political "skits," which, having purely local force, it was deemed unnecessary to incorporate here, though they show his lightness of touch. In another vein is a later poem, also excluded, directed against Wendell Phillips, at the time of the latter's first delivery, in 1866, of his once famous oration, "The South Victorious," which excited the northern mind by its trenchant and sarcastic review of the political situation then existing. As an example of the sarcastic personal tone, these two stanzas will be of interest:

" I only of the sons of men
Am chosen by the Creator;
My voice alone is Truth—my pen
The only revelator;

Alone of all I look with eyes
Serene and analytic,
I—Phillips—the destroyer of lies,
God's consecrated critic.

“What Moses was to Israel,
Priest—leader—intercessor,
Deliverer from the jaws of hell,
And from the stout oppressor,
Such to this godless age am I,
Throned loftily above it,
Sole climber of its Sinai,
Like to the ancient prophet.”

The lyric, “A Tress of Hair,” relates to the twined bracelet of blonde hair found on his arm when dead, which is fairly presumed to have been a sad souvenir of the earliest incident of his love-life. It is believed to have been a tress cut from the locks of Miss Noel. The series known as the “Free State Lyrics” were, with some others, published in the *Kansas News*, of Emporia, in the spring and summer of 1857.

Realf's residence in the South from September, 1852, to January, 1860, offers no poetic flotsam or jetsam to my industrious search. Statements have been made that he wrote, during the period of mysticism which landed him temporarily within the folds of the Catholic Church, some poems of a rapt religious tone. I have not been able to procure copies of these, but *The Catholic Standard*, of New Orleans, is reported to have been the medium of their publication. The paper long since ceased issue, and no trace of files or editors has

been available. Nor are there any fugitive verses found, after he left the Jesuit College in October, 1858, during the months of his wandering and lecturing in Alabama and Texas. The first poem between Springdale, 1858, and Cleveland, 1860, besides the two sonnets mentioned, is the one denunciatory of the Heenan-Sayres prize fight, published in Garrison's "*Liberator*," during April, 1860. The long months spent among the Ohio Shakers the same year, brought no poems for publication, and not until after the attack in the streets of Baltimore, April 19, 1861, does the name of Richard Realf appear in print, at least as far as I can trace him. "Apocalypse" is the earliest of his striking series of war poems, and "My Sword Song," published in the *Chicago Tribune* late in the fall of 1862, was the next by which he can be known.

Then followed, during the breathing spells of military activity, two fine poems to Abraham Lincoln, "A Soldier's Psalm of Women," published in the *Continental*, (N. Y.) June, 1864, and "Io Triumphe," a superb and ringing outburst. The sonnets of the war period include three superb ones dedicated to Abraham Lincoln, two to "A lady who chides him for not writing," (Mrs. Cramer, of Chicago), and another to the same after she wrote of her infirmity of deafness. The sonnet "Vates," written to General Lytle, author of "I am Dying, Egypt, Dying," is one of his most widely known efforts, owing largely to the tragic circumstances following its writing. Realf was in the brigade commanded by Gen-

Sonnet.

Speech of Brig Genl Wm H Lytle Bridgeport. Alabama

'Vat's! 'I shouted, while your solemn words,
 Rhythmic with crowned passion, lilted past: -
 That land which thrilled with anguish, still affords
 Great souls all, couched in one grand battle-bleat.
 Like this soul and this singing, shall not fail.
 So much as by a fair's breadth, of the large
 Results of affluent wisdom, where into
 Across the bloody gaps our swords must lean.
 And far beyond the mountain and the marge,
 We press with curved limbs that yet shall scold
 The topmost heights of being. Therefore those
 Lead on, that we may follow; for I think
 The future hath not wherefrom we should shrink,
 Held by the steadfast shining of your brow

Richard Leafe.

[Facsimile of the Lytle Sonnet.]

eral Lytle, serving as a non-commissioned officer. Both met as such when duty permitted, and became warm friends. During the forward movement which closed for the time in the occupancy of Chattanooga and the great battle of Chickamauga, General Lytle made a speech at Bridgeport, Alabama. "Vates" illustrates its effect on Realf, and expresses also the admiration he felt. The MS. of the sonnet was in the General's vest pocket, and was penetrated by the bullet that killed him during the early morning hours of September 20, 1863, when directly in front of the regiment of which Realf was sergeant-major. It was the second day of the Chickamauga fighting. The sonnet and a MS. copy of "My Sword Song," were soaked red with Lytle's blood. Another poem, personal in character, beginning, "Not a faultless seeming face," was addressed to some lady correspondent who sent the soldier her photograph. It was probably Miss May J. Jordan, as I received from her the portrait of Realf in fatigue dress which is found in this volume. Mention has been made of an Ode to President Lincoln, written and published at Nashville immediately after the assassination, but I have never been able to trace it or to find a copy. "Io Triumphe" was evoked by the surrender at Appomattox, and "Emancipation" followed the memorable 1st of July, 1863. These poems were published in *Harper's* and the *Atlantic* monthlies, or in the *Harper's Weekly* and the *Independent*. He does not seem to have directly addressed any poems to his future wife, Miss Graves, except an early version

of "Love Makes All Things Musical;" but was in the habit, as she wrote me, of forwarding manuscript copies of all he sent for publication.

The period following his mustering out of the 88th Illinois, in June, 1865, and his renewal of service in the colored troops and southern reconstruction duty, up to the date of his leaving Vicksburg as a citizen again, in March, 1866, was fruitful in a number of fine and virile lyrics, most of them, however, touching on dominant topics of the day. During the summer of 1865, "Hash-eesh,"—certainly one of his most remarkable poems, one in which he touched the deepest of esoteric meanings,—was written. One thinks of Joaquin Miller's reference to Burns, in reading it, as "one who knelt a stranger at his own hearth, seeing all, yet unseen, alone." He began also at this time what was designed to be a long and sustained poem, but a fragment of which has been preserved.

Realf's prose is as marked in its rhetorical power and finish as are his poems for their rythm, melody, deep insight, and oftime spiritual grandeur. He was gifted as an orator, and his prose had much of the swing, affluence, and passion of his fervid speech. Yet, as an editorial writer, he became recognized for terse, direct power, epigrammatic capacity and grasp, homely illustrative faculty, and a sharp, logical grip on facts and statements.

His war letters, however, are to me the most attractive and valuable of his prose. There remains in my

possession material sufficient to make another volume, which would be an effective prose contribution to current American literature. His lectures and orations were almost overpowering in their eloquent tension and graduated power. His voice was an exquisite tenor, deepening to a light baritone. It was the organ of an orator, the timbre fine, and the tones musical and well modulated.

Richard Realf looked like the traditional poet—even to the day of his death. His handsome head, face, and body were a fit receptacle for his handsome soul and brilliant mind. Short of stature, being not over five feet five in height, he was very boyish looking when I first met him in November, 1855. Time dims memories; yet, though forty-three years have passed, I still remember the figure that passed into my life as that of a beautiful Greek, an Apollo that Phidias would have chiseled into immortal marble. The young form was slight and graceful, though not weak, hands and feet small and perfectly formed. The rounded, perfectly shaped head, sat well on a fitly proportioned neck. I recall the ensemble: brown, wavy, and plentiful hair, a slight, silky moustache, a broad, white forehead, perfectly shaped face and features. His eyes were a fine hazel, deepening to a dark brown, or lightening to a keen gray, his nose well-shaped, broad at the root; finely penciled, arched eyebrows and a rounded, sensuous chin completed the handsome face of Richard Realf.

What thing more remains to be said of Richard Realf.



Intellectually and spiritually, judging of him as a true poet, whatsoever had been the failures of his objective life, he remained true to his finest moods and subjective ideals. His own measure of himself, as the Poet, may, perhaps, be found in the following sonnet, written early in his Pittsburg days, and entitled by him

THE SINGER.

O high, impalpable spirit of Song which dost
Yield only, evermore, most palpable pain,
It is so hard and bitter that I must
To all thy silent scantities attain,
And not thy sweet serenities; so hard
To wear thy keen revealing crowns, which prick
Till the brows quiver, and to be debarred
Thy kisses, which thrill also to the quick,
Cleansing our lips for singing. But I am
Even in dumb paths renunciative content:
Content beneath thy solemn oriflamme,
Albeit thou treadest not the hard ascent
With me, since only from such dimmest height
Can man conjecture of God's Infinite!

POEMS

SONNETS

SYMBOLISMS

ALL round us lie the awful sacrednesses
Of babes and cradles, graves and hoary hairs;
Of girlish laughters and of manly cares;
Of moaning sighs and passionate caresses;
Of infinite ascensions of the soul,
And wild hyena-hungers of the flesh;
Of cottage virtues and the solemn roll
Of populous cities' thunder, and the fresh,
Warm faith of childhood, sweet as mignonette
Amid Doubt's bitter herbage, and the dear
Re-glimpses of the early stars which set
Down the blue skies of our lost hemisphere,
And all the consecrations and delights
Woven in the texture of the days and nights.

The daily miracle of Life goes on
Within our chambers, at the household hearths,
In sober duties and in jocund mirths;
In all the unquiet hopes and fears that run
Out of our hearts along the edges of

Symbolisms

The terrible abysses; in the calms
Of friendship, in the ecstasies of love;
In burial-dirges and in marriage-psalms;
In all the far weird voices that we hear;
In all the mystic visions we behold;
In our souls' summers when the days are clear;
And in our winters when the nights are cold,
And in the subtle secrets of our breath,
And that Annunciation men call death.

O Earth! thou hast not any wind that blows
Which is not music: every weed of thine
Pressed rightly flows in aromatic wine;
And every humble hedgerow flower that grows,
And every little brown bird that doth sing,
Hath something greater than itself, and bears
A living Word to every living thing,
Albeit it hold the Message unawares.

All shapes and sounds have something which is **not**
Of them: a Spirit broods amid the grass;
Vague outlines of the Everlasting Thought
Lie in the melting shadows as they pass;
The touch of an Eternal Presence thrills
The fringes of the sunsets and the hills.

For ever, through the world's material forms,
Heaven shoots its immaterial; night and day

Symbolisms

Apocalyptic intimations stray
Across the rifts of matter; viewless arms
Lean lovingly toward us from the air;
There is a breathing marvel in the sea;
The sapphire foreheads of the mountains wear
A light within light which ensymbols the
Unutterable Beauty and Perfection
That, with immeasurable strivings, strives
Through bodied form and sensuous indirection
To hint into our dull and hardened lives
(Poor lives, that can not see nor hear aright!)

The bodiless glories which are out of sight.

Sometimes (we know not how, nor why, nor whence)
The twitter of the swallows' neath the eaves,
The shimmer of the light among the leaves,
Will strike up through the thick roofs of our sense,
And show us things which seers and sages saw
In the gray earth's green dawn: something doth stir
Like organ-hymns within us, and doth awe
Our pulses into listening, and confer
Burdens of Being on us; and we ache
With weights of Revelation, and our ears
Hear voices from the Infinite that take
The hushed soul captive, and the saddening years
Seem built on pillared joys, and overhead
Vast dove-like wings that arch the world are spread.

Insufficiency

He, by such raptnesses and intuitions,
Doth pledge his utmost immortality
Unto our mortal insufficiency,
Fettered in grossness, that these sensual prisons,
Against whose bars we beat so tired wings,
Avail not to ward off the clear access
Of His high heralds and interpretings;
Wherefore, albeit we may not fully guess
The meaning of the wonder, let us keep
Clean channels for the instincts which respond
To the Unutterable Sanctities that sweep
Down the far reaches of the strange Beyond,
Whose mystery strikes the spirit into fever,
And haunts, and hurts, and blesses us for ever.

INSUFFICIENCY

I.

O THAT some Poet, with awed lips on fire
Of the Ineffable Altars, would arise,
And with his consecrated songs baptize
Our souls in harmony, that we might acquire
Insight into the essential heart of Life,
Beating with rhythmic pulses. There is lost,
In the gross echoes of our brawling strife,

Insufficiency

Music more rare than that which did accost
Shakspeare's Imagination, when it swept
Nearest the Infinite. Our spirits are
All out of tune; our discords intercept
The strains which, like the singing of a star,
Stream downward from the Holies, to attest,
Beyond our jarring restlessnesses, Rest.

II.

I think our ideal aims will still elude
Our eager wishes—that we still shall miss
The elemental blessedness which is
Incorporate somewhere in our humanhood—
That still the unsolved riddles of the Sphinx
Will vex us with an inward agony—
That still within our daily meats and drinks
Will lurk an unknown poison, until we
Learn more of reverence for the Soul of Man!
O friends, I fear we do but desecrate
The sanctity of Being—do but fan
The cruel fires of slowly-dying Hate,
Instead of kindling hero-lives to dare
Greatly for Man's hope against Man's despair.

III.

Our plummets are too short to fathom well
The deep things of existence. Unto pride

Insufficiency

And unto bitterness it is denied
To know the sacred temples wherein dwell
The oracles and angels. We want first,
For the interpretation of the land,
Love, whereby Faith, the seer of Truth, is nursed;
And Sympathy, by which to understand
The faces of our fellows. What we need
Is dew on our dry natures—sustenance
For the starved spirit—not the outward greed.
We lean too much on palpable circumstance,
Too little on impalpable souls, to attain
God's morrows for our yesterdays of pain.

IV.

We want more depth, more sweetness, less reliance
On visible forms and ceremonial laws;
Less venomous jeering, at the ingrained flaws
Which mar our brother's beauty; less defiance,
Less clannish spite, less airy sciolism,
Less incense burned at worldly altars, less
Chuckling, less supercilious criticism;
More warmth, more meekness, and true lowliness,
More human moisture in our lives, more smell
Of flowers about our gardens, better sense
That something worthy and acceptable
May lie beyond the walls with which we fence
Our isolation round; excluding thus
The high ones who would fain have speech of us.

Insufficiency

v.

It is not by repressions and restraints
Men are withheld from imminent damnation,
But by the spiritual affiliation
Of love with love. Our vehemence acquaints
Heaven with our weakness, chiefly. O, we must
Lower our proud voices, front less haughtily
The inexorable years; learn ampler trust
In God's child, Man, with God's eternity
Standing behind him, before we may quell
Our riotous devils strongly, or drown out
The conflagrations which are lit of hell;
Or, panoplied in wisdom, put to rout
The insurrectionary ranks of lies
Which hang like murder on our best emprise.

vi.

Lo, this is Christdom! This same blessed earth,
From its clear coronals of the air we breathe,
Down to the primal granite underneath
Its mountains, hath had very notable birth
Out of Judaic insufficiency.
But what are we but unbelieving men,
Who put not Christ in our philosophy,
And only call our brothers bretheren
On Sabbaths merely? Tooth for tooth is good,

Insufficiency

We think on week-days—the old rigor that
With literal eye for eye and blood for blood,
Through all the centuries striveth to tread flat
The immemorial hill from which alone
We dare lift steady eyes to the unknown.

VII.

What shall we say then?—That our brother's crimes
Augur our own diseases; that his hurts
Imply our shames; that the same bond engirts
Alike the man who lapses and who climbs;
That formulas and credos, when divorced
From the great spirit of all-pervading ruth,
Leave still the lean and thirsty world athirst
For the deep heart and blessedness of truth;—
That in the noblest there is something base
And in the meanest noble; that behind
The sensual darkness of the human face
Not to be quenched by any adverse wind,
Enough of God's light flickers for a sign
That our best possible is His divine.

VIII.

Here's room for poets! Here is ground for seers!—
Broad leagues of acres waiting for the seed
Whose recompensing sheaves of song shall breed,
Within the bosom of the garnering years,
Harvests of prodigal plenty. O ye lips,

My Slain

Anointed for the proper utterance
Of what things lie in worthy fellowships!
O eyes to which the dread significance
Of life's grand mystery is visible!
For lack of ye the poor earth perishes—
The patient earth, so very beautiful;
The comely earth, so clung with noble stress;
Aching for God unutterably, and wet
With most immortal tears and bloody sweat.

MY SLAIN

THIS sweet child which hath climbed upon my knee,
This amber-haired, four-summered little maid,
With her unconscious beauty troubleth me,
With her low prattle maketh me afraid.
Ah, darling! when you cling and nestle so,
You hurt me, tho you do not see me cry,
Nor hear the weariness with which I sigh
For the dear babe I killed so long ago.
I tremble at the touch of your caress;
I am not worthy of your innocent faith,
I who, with whetted knives of worldliness
Did put my own child-heartedness to death—
Beside whose grave I pace forever more,
Like desolation on a ship-wrecked shore.

My Slain

There is no little child within me now,
To sing back to the thrushes, to leap up
When June winds kiss me, when an apple bough
Laughs into blossom, or a buttercup
Plays with the sunshine, or a violet
Dances in the glad dew—alas! alas!
The meaning of the daisies in the grass
I have forgotten; and if my cheeks are wet,
It is not with the blitheness of a child,
But with the bitter sorrow of sad years.
O moaning life with life irreconciled!
O backward-looking thought! O pain! O tears!
For us there is not any silver sound
Of rhythmic wonder springing from the ground.

Woe worth the knowledge and the bookish lore
Which makes men mummies; weighs out every grain
Of that which was miraculous before,
And sneers the heart down with the scoffing brain.
Woe worth the peering, analytic days
That dry the tender juices in the breast,
And put the thunders of the Lord to test
So that no marvel must be, and no praise,
Nor any God except Necessity.
What can you give my poor starved life in lieu
Of this dead cherub which I slew for ye?
Take back your doubtful wisdom, and renew
My early foolish freshness of the dunce,
Whose simple instinct guessed the heavens at once.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN—1863

I.

IT touches to the quick the spirit of one
Who knows what Freedom is; whose eyes have seen
The crops thou sowest ripen in the sun;
Whose feet have trod the fields wherein men glean
The harvests of thy lonely hours, when thou
Didst grapple with the Incarnate Insolence
Lording the Land with impious pretense,
And very bravely on its arrogant brow
Didst set thy sealed abhorrence—when he hears
The glib invectives which men launch at thee,
Beloved of Peoples, crowned in all thy years
Nestor of all our chiefs of Liberty,
As if thou wert some devil of crafty spell
Let loose to lure the unwary unto hell.

II.

But thou art wiser; thy clear spiritual sense
Threading our tangled darkness, seest how
The equilibriums of Omnipotence
Poise the big worlds in safety. Disavow
And jeer thee as men will, stab, howl, and curse,
They can not blur the glory of thy fame,
Nor pluck the noble memories of thy name

Abraham Lincoln—1863

From the glad keeping of the Universe,
 Quickened with the conjunction of thy Spirit.
For lo! thou art Our's alone—and yet thou art
 Nature's, Mankind's, the Age's! We inherit
Joint treasures from thee; but we stand apart
 From all the earth in bitter trespasses
 'Gainst thee and thy great throb of tenderness.

III.

Nathless, let not our cold ingratitude
 Make sad the soul within thee: in the years
When the full meanings of our brotherhood
 Roll their high revelations round the spheres,
The solemn passion of thy life shall be
 A wonder and a worship unto all,
 Whose eyes behold the Apocalyptic
Transfiguration of Humanity.
 Meanwhile, because thy recompense is pain,
Weary not thou; invisible lips shall kiss
 The trouble from thy heart and from thy brain,
In all the days of thy self-sacrifice,
 Thy blessed hurts being still thy amplest wage,
 Thou Archimedes of Love's leverage.

TO A LADY AFFLICTED WITH DEAF- NESS

WHY what a sweet and sacred recompense,
Dear friend, doth reinforce thy meagre loss!

Because, albeit upon thy outward sense

Fainter than naked feet on woodland moss,
The blessed sounds of the blessed world do fall,

The fine ear of the soul is so intense

With its quick nerve, thou apprehendest all

The multitudinous voices which arise
From the singing earth unto the seeing stars—

Its low sad minors, its triumphant cries,
The lusty shouting of its conquerors,

The slaves' hushed wail, the tender mother's sighs:
Through all, thy listening spiritual instincts hark
God luring his poor children from the dark.

IN PERIL

I.

BECAUSE of the bleak anguish of her cry.
When our two natures tore themselves apart,

Like a hell-horror crashing through my heart,
Wiping God's stars from out his purple sky,
I think I can the better testify

In Peril

Unto the terrible smiting stroke which clave
Thro' the fine fibers of your delicate brain,
When, with your lashes trickling drops of rain,
For the last time your shivering lips you gave
To his, for kisses and for comfortings.
O deep, deep woman heart! O coiling pain
Of blackened silence, leaden as the grave;
O weary stricken dove, O drooping wings,
Christ hold thee in thy dark of shudderings.

II.

Be strong—be strong! I think that He who held
His Son's soul in his Soul's Gethsemane,
Who smote the royal first-born, and compelled
The maddened waters of the moaning sea
To crouch in awe at his prophetic knee,
And harnessed his own fiery cloud of stars,
To march before his chosen humanity—
I say I think the sweep of scimetars
He will ward off from him who loveth thee.
O many limbs must yawn with ghastly scars
Before a godless hand may ever touch
This Moses of an Israel that is free.
Therefore—O trembler! grieve not overmuch
For him who yet shall clasp thee tenderly.

LOVE'S MARVEL

I THINK that Love makes all things musical,
As, melted in the marvels of its breaths,
Our barren lives to blossoming lyrics swell,
And the new births shine upward from old deaths,
Witching the world with wonder. Thus to-day
Watching the crowding people in the street,
I thought the ebbing and the flowing feet
Moved to a delicate sense of rhythm alway,
And that I heard the yearning faces say,
“Soul, sing me this new song!” The Autumn leaves
Throbbled subtly to me an immortal tune;
And when a warm shower wet the roofs at noon,
Low melodies seemed to slide down from the eaves,
Dying delicious in a dreamy swoon.

VIOLA'S SONG

DO you remember how, a day ago,
You broke into a mellow Tuscan hymn?
And how your spirit's passionate overflow,
In waves of living jubilation did grow
And greaten all around you, till the dim
And shadowy parlor trembled to and fro
With shining splendors, as though the cherubim

Decoration Day

Waved their white wings above it? O, dear tones
Of that rare singing! O, the subtle voice
Which shook me to the marrow of my bones,
And clenched and held me till I had no choice
Save in bowed reverence to follow it
Along its starry pathway—thrilled and lit
With radiance of far incandescent thrones.

DECORATION DAY

THANK God for Liberty's dear slain; they give
Perpetual consecration unto it,
Quick'ning the clay of our insensitive
Dull natures with the awe of infinite,
Sun-crowned transfiguration, such as fit
On the solemn-brooding mountains. O, the dead,
How they do shame the living; how they warn
Our little lives that huckster for the bread
Of peace, and tremble at the world's poor scorn,
To pick their steps among the flowers, and tread
Daintily soft where the raised idols are,
Prone with gross dalliance where the feasts are spread,
When most they should strive forth, and flash afar
Light, like the streaming of heroic war.

PATIENCE

THE swift years bring but slow development
Of the worlds majestic; for Freedom is
Born grandly orb'd, as a solid continent,
Layer upon layer, from chaos and the abyss,
Shoulders its awful granite to the light,
Building the eternal mountains, on whose crests,
Pinnaced in the intense sapphire, rests
The brooding calmness of the Infinite.
But we, whirled round and round in heated gusts
Of eager indignation, think to weigh
Against God's patience our gross griefs and lusts
Like foolish Jonah before Nineveh
(O world-wide symbol of his vanished gourd!)
Expostulating gravely with the Lord.

PASSION

I CLENCH my arms about your neck, until
The knuckles of my hands grow white with pain,
And my swollen muscles quiver with the strain,
And all the pulses of my life stand still.
I say I clench so. Ah! you can not tear
Yourself away from my immortal grip
Of forlorn tenderness and salt despair,

Silence Still

And child-like sorrowing after fellowship,
And wolf-like hunger of the famishing heart;
For not until my sundering fibers crack,
And my torn limbs from their wrenched sockets start,
O darling, darling! will I yield me back
To that lone hell whence, shuddering through and
through,
With one wild tiger-leap I sprang to you.

SILENCE STILL

BUT do not heed my trembling; do not shrink
Because my face is haggard, and my eyes
Blaze hot with thirstiness as they would drink
Your wells up to their ultimate supplies.
I will not hurt you, darling! I will be
More tender than our Mothers were to us
In our first days of helpless infancy.—
And if I kiss you thus, and thus, and thus;
And fling toward you—so—and make you wreathe
Nigher and nigher, until you can not breathe
Save by my sufferance,—I will not wet
Your dead white forehead with a single stain
(I will watch so) from all the purple rain
Of my great agony and bloody sweat.

A YEAR AGO

I.

A YEAR ago two thin and delicate hands
Trembled within my passionate parting clasp,
Two dreamy eyes seemed spiritual overmuch,
And one white brow my hot lips loved to touch,
Burned as if belted by the securing bonds
That crown our crowns of sorrow. Then she spoke:
“God keep you”—but a sudden shivering gasp
Splintered the rest to silence with one stroke.
O, t’was well feigned! the exquisite, audible sign,
The mute beseeching of the bloodless lips
The paleness reaching to the finger tips,
And the deep, mournful splendor of the eye.
God! but her rare skill smote me as a cry
Of those who perish amid sinking ships.

II.

Now, let this pass! O, woman, there shall come
In the deep midnights, when thy pulses throb,
And something startles thee like a low sob,
A shining grandeur that shall strike thee dumb—
The glory of a great white martyrdom!
And nothing save the old clock on the wall,
Whose strokes shall crash like awful thunder then,
Shall answer thee when thou shalt wildly call

David Swing

On the strange past to speak to thee again
With one voice more! but thou shalt grope and crawl
Along wet burial crypts, and thy large tears,
Scorched with the heat of thy strong agony,
Shall blister on the dead hopes of old years,
Who shall rise up to glare and mock at thee.

DAVID SWING

FOR souls like thine, coined of creative fire,
Electric with quick instincts—it is hard
To endure the fool, the Pharisee, the liar,
The scoffs and jeers of little lives on guard
Against the lifting Savior; terrible
To tread most sovran indignation down
With still more sovran pity—to annul
The wrong as though it were not, and to crown
Man-hating with Christ-loving; bitter as death
To keep calm lips closed over burning breath,
And make the clenched fist reverence the will
That holds the tingling fibers in restraint.
Yet only through such pain may we fulfil
The measure of the hero and the saint.

Truth's self is Truth's own triumph and success.
Therefore wait thou: Whoso hath eyes to see

David Swing

The marvel of his everlastingness.

Rooted in God's immutability;

He whose true soul is reverent and wise

To read the lesson of the Universe,

That not in crowd nor ritualities,

Nor the proud pomps with which men bless and curse,

Lie liberty and mastery, but alone

In that ineffable Christ whom we disown,

Needeth no human succor—for he is

Girt all about with the Invisible.

Wherefore, albeit thine enemies howl and hiss,

Remain thou silent, till thine hour is full.

Until thine hour is full. For there shall come

A moment when, with clarified, soft eyes,

Men shall behold thy stature, and stand dumb,

Stricken with large and beautiful surprise.

But this is not thy glory; the broad gaze

Of seeing natures, the sweet sobs and shouts

Of glad, freed thralls who in new-throbbing praise

Do penance for the evil of old doubts—

The home in good men's hearts, the wider faith,

The benedictions poured along thy path,

The prayers that run like couriers at thy side,

The dear beliefs of childhood's innocence—

These are as naught: that thou hast justified

Thy soul with love, is thy soul's recompense.

IN A SCRAP BOOK

HERE, gathered from all places and all time,
The waifs of wisdom and of folly meet.
High thoughts that awe and lilting words that chime
Like Sabbath bells heard in far vallies sweet;
Quaint fancies, musical with dainty rhyme
Like the soft patter of an infant's feet;
And laughter radiant as summer skies,
The genial sunshine of the happy heart;
And giant hopes looking out from human eyes,
With thrilling hymns that make the quick tears start,
Are here, in garlands of strange fantasy,
To catch the careless passer's casual look,
And show, within the limits of a book,
Unto him his life's own large epitome.

TO FRANK B. CARPENTER, ARTIST,

After seeing his portrait of Henry Ward Beecher

IT was thy soul's deep reverence earned thee this,
And not thy painter's cunning,—the true eye,
Bathed in the light of shining prophecy,
To understand the spiritual influences
Wherefrom do spring the wonderful mysteries

To an English Friend

Of the high speech of features! Else, whence came
The silent subtle aroma that grows
Like the utter sweetness of a perfect rose
To the hearts of the beholders, and the flame
Clasping his brows with the old tenderness,
So that once more we part our lips to bless
The yearning face we look on, and pass forth
Watching the glorious bountiful sun caress
The people swarming on the rugged earth.

TO AN ENGLISH FRIEND

STAND still, and let me read thee as thou art!
O, like a spiritual hearted child, who stands
Watching a dying sunset by the sea,
When blazing awe hath stricken his lips apart,
And crept, like thunder, through the clenched hands
With which he clutched at that God's prophecy,
And missed it: so stands shivering on the sands,
Staring his reddened eyes into the night,
Straining his splintered heartstrings till he dies—
So does the hunger of his famishing eyes
Glare toward the line of overwhelming light
That stunned thee into speechlessness; and yet
It stands and waits in the eternities,
To clasp thee sudden when thy cheeks are wet.

TO MRS. M——, OF ENGLAND

On the birth of her first child

WHEN you lay shivering with the great excess
Of mother-marvel at your child's first cry;
When you looked up and saw him standing by,
Leaning the strong unspeakable utterness
Of all his soul upon you; when you smiled,
And your weak lips strove mightily to frame
To a new song your new life's oriflamme,
And presently the infinite words, "Our child,"
Made a most musical murmur, as of breath
Breathed by a poet's spirit—did you know
The babe's slight moan, that seemed so faint and low,
Was God's voice speaking from dear Nazareth,
Covering you up with that white light that lay
On Mary and her young Christ in the hay?

TO A LADY ON CHIDING ME FOR NOT WRITING

I.

IF still I hold my peace, and stand aloof
From giving thee tongue-worship, it is not
Because my nature hath grown passion proof:
In truth I think my heart's blood is as hot

To a Lady on Chiding me for not Writing

As when, foreseeing my spirit would else rot,
Heaven purged me with hell's sulphur; only now,
Leaning here, with my sword drawn, on my shield,
Ribbed with the strokes of battle's deadliest hate,
I have no leisure to unbend my brow
Into the mood of sonnets! Ay, and thou—
Though the deep song be nevermore revealed,
And thine own anthem perish uncreate—
Wilt deem me manlier that I do not yield
The stern hour unto music: therefore, wait!

II.

Wait! it is better so. Some day, perhaps,
The Word within may find an utterance.
Only not now while God's great thunder-claps
And still small voices of vast covenants
Are talking with my soul. I must be dumb
When Heaven speaks, and my hungry eyes do glance
Into the deeps of Being, tho' my heart
Break with its bursting silence.—O, dear friend,
I surely trust the Pentecost will come,
When these mute yearnings of my life shall start
Into a living lyric, that shall blend
Music with all my pulses, and ascend
Calmly and purely the celestial hope—
A belt of fire across my horoscope.

THE TRUTH

THE great world grows in glory; near and far
God's blinding splendors blaze upon our eyes;
And thunders, as of newer Sinais,
Crash triple grandeurs of deep prophecies;
And large loves, white as Christ's own Angels are,
Fling shining sweetnesses on all the spheres;
And calm vast hymns, high as the morning star,
Throb throneward from the green isles of the seas.
Yea, all the days are as a Mother's tears—
Brimfull with unsaid meanings. Therefore now
I will stretch forth my yearning hands to seize
The luminous Truth, which, girdled on my brow,
Shall fringe my soul with flaming sanctities,
The early promise of an ancient vow.

TO MISS H—— B——

I.

I HAVE been homeless such a weary while;
Have lived so long upon Love's scattered crumbs,
Strewn in the outer alleys of the world;
My naked heart has been so dashed and whirled
From side to side in bitter martyrdoms,
Made all the bitterer by the lean, sad smile

To Miss H——— B———

Shivering upon my lips, that this new feast
Whereto I am bidden as chief banqueter,
And whereat, though my speech be of the least,
I may bend on her my great, greedy eyes,
Walk by her side, a reverent listener—
Silent, 'till all my own soul's silences
Burst into blossoming music: 'tis too deep,
Too very blessed! Heart—be still and weep.

II.

I held her name between me and the sun
And then I staggered downward to my knees;
O, blessed Christ! how my brain reeled and spun
When, like a flash from the Eternities,
The blinding blaze of burning glory clung
Around the luminous letters, till the name
Shot outward into breathing life, a flame
With Godlike splendor, as a cloven tongue
Of awful Pentecost!

O Holiest

Of all the holy! O, great Infinite
Who thro' all works still workest all things best;
I yield this name unto thee; pure and white
Keep it, dear Father! Keep it in Thy sight—
Keep it for me when my soul can not rest.

IN NOTRE DAME

THEY look down from their places on the wall
With such transfigurings in their steadfast eyes,
You see a sweet ascending glory rise
About their foreheads apostolical,
And hear such wondrous spiritual replies
From those meek lips of patient sorrow fall,
You kneel down in the light that glorifies
The aisles of silent worshipers, and thrill
Beneath the anointed, soothing hand that lies
On the moaning surge of your dark agonies
Born of the lapses of the heart and will
From God's high levels to man's low tracts of ill;
And pass forth quivering with the soft surprise
That touched you in the whisper, "Peace, be still."

TO THADDEUS HYATT

WHEN God spake unto Moses, and the crags
Of Sinai shook with thunder, do you think
The gaping Jews upon the river brink,
Stripping the tinsel from their priestly rags
To build them yellow idols, ever caught

Nannie's Picture

'Mid the loud tumult of their mummeries,
The slightest whisper of the Eternal Thought?
So, do you think that those who fret and fume,
Tossed round and round in a great whirl of lies
Can catch the meaning lying in your eyes,
Or mark the colors of the mystic bloom
Whose silent growth is as a rose of fire;
Or through the rifts of dark, and mist, and gloom,
See Godlike Love beneath your manly ire?

NANNIE'S PICTURE

C HILD-INSTINCT of the Holy mingles here,
With the fine painter-cunning: heart and eye
All steeped in seeing of the mystic sky
Which broods above the enchanted wondersphere
The little children walk in. Else, whence came
The aromatic effluence that grows,
Dear as first fragrance of a dawning rose,
Out from the canvas—and the subtle flame
Wreathing the dainty baby-brows with light
Clothed with revealings of the Infinite—
Making us part revering lips to bless
The winsome face we look on, and pass forth,
Watching the beatific Sun caress
The people swarming on the happy earth?

“ VATES.”

[Written to General Lytle, author of the poem, “Antony to Cleopatra,” (“I am dying, Egypt, dying”), who was killed at Chickamauga, the bullet passing through the original manuscript of this sonnet. Orderly Sergeant Realf served in Lytle’s Brigade, and the two poets were friends.]

“ VATES,” I shouted, while your solemn words
Rhythmic with crowded passion, lilted past;
“ That Land which, thrilled with anguish, still affords
Great souls all coined in one grand battle blast,
Like this soul and this singing, shall not fail
So much as by a hair’s-breadth, of the large
Results of affluent wisdom, whereunto
Across the bloody gaps our blades must hold,
And far beyond the mountain and the maze
We pass with bruised limbs that yet shall scale
The topmost heights of Being! Therefore, thou
Lead on, that we may follow, for I think
The Future hath not wherefrom we should shrink,
Held by the steadfast shining of your brow!”

TO R. J. H.

I MARKED fine crownings of a Crowning Hand
Flush on his brooding brows: and, catching so
The inward radiance through the outward glow,
I know that very tranquil, deep and grand,
Waited a power within him to withstand
All luring shows of things that were not based

Written on the Night of His Suicide.

On firmamental pillars. Then I said
I thank God reverently that amid this
Loud whirl of eager faction He hath placed
A far-eyed seër, calm-poised of heart and head—
A lithe-thewed Titan with winged faiths that kiss
The crests of difficult peaks, and tread the paths
Where the clear-sighted walk by the abyss
Close to diviner loves and holier wraths.

WRITTEN ON THE NIGHT OF HIS SUICIDE

“*D*^E *mortuis nil nisi bonum.*” When
For me this end has come and I am dead,
And the little voluble, chattering daws of men
Peck at me curiously, let it then be said
By some one brave enough to speak the truth:
Here lies a great soul killed by cruel wrong.
Down all the balmy days of his fresh youth
To his bleak, desolate noon, with sword and song,
And speech that rushed up hotly from the heart,
He wrought for liberty, till his own wound
(He had been stabbed), concealed with painful art
Through wasting years, mastered him, and he
swooned,
And sank there where you see him lying now
With the word “Failure” written on his brow.

Written on the Night of His Suicide.

But say that he succeeded. If he missed
World's honors, and world's plaudits, and the wage
Of the world's deft lacqueys, still his lips were kissed
Daily by those high angels who assuage
The thirstings of the poets—for he was
Born unto singing—and a burthen lay
Mightily on him, and he moaned because
He could not rightly utter to the day
What God taught in the night. Sometimes, nathless,
Power fell upon him, and bright tongues of flame,
And blessings reached him from poor souls in stress;
And benedictions from black pits of shame,
And little children's love, and old men's prayers,
And a Great Hand that led him unawares.

So he died rich. And if his eyes were blurred
With big films—silence ! he is in his grave.
Greatly he suffered; greatly, too, he erred;
Yet broke his heart in trying to be brave.
Nor did he wait till Freedom had become
The popular shibboleth of courtier's lips;
He smote for her when God Himself seemed dumb
And all His arching skies were in eclipse.
He was a-weary, but he fought his fight,
And stood for simple manhood; and was joyed
To see the august broadening of the light
And new earths heaving heavenward from the void.
He loved his fellows, and their love was sweet—
Plant daisies at his head and at his feet.

WAR AND
RELATED
LYRICS

APOCALYPSE

Private Arthur Ladd, Sixth Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers,
First Martyr in the War for Liberty of 1861-5. Slain in Baltimore,
April 19, 1861.

S TRAIGHT to his heart the bullet crushed;
Down from his breast the red blood gushed,
And over his face a glory rushed.

A sudden spasm shook his frame,
And in his ears there went and came
A sound as of devouring flame,

Which in a moment ceased, and then
The great light clasped his brows again,
So that they shone like Stephen's when

Saul stood apart a little space,
And shook with trembling awe to trace
God's splendors settling o'er his face.

Thus, like a king, erect in pride,
Raising clean hands toward heaven, he cried,
"All hail the Stars and Stripes!" and died.

Died grandly. But before he fell,
(O blessedness ineffable!)
Vision Apocalyptical

Apocalypse

Was granted to him, and his eyes,
All radiant with glad surprise,
Looked forward through the centuries,

And saw the seed which sages cast
On the world's soil in cycles past,
Spring up and blossom at the last.

Saw how the souls of men had grown,
And where the scythes of truth had mown
Clear 'space for Liberty's white throne.

Saw how, by sorrows tried and proved,
The blackening stains had been removed
Forever from the land he loved.

Saw Treason crushed, and Freedom crowned,
And clamorous fury gagged and bound,
Gasping its life upon the ground.

Saw how, across his Country's slopes
Walked swarming troops of cheerful hopes,
Which evermore to broader scopes

Increased, with power that comprehends
The world's weal in its own, and bends
Self-needs to large unselfish ends.

Apocalypse

Saw how, throughout the vast extents
Of earth's most populous continents
She dropped such rare-hearted affluence,

That from beyond the utmost seas
The wondering people thronged to seize
Her proffered pure benignities.

Saw how, of all her trebled host
Of widening empires, none might boast
Whose love were best, or strength were most,

Because they grew so equal there
Beneath the flag which, debonair,
Waved joyous in the cleansed air.

With far off vision, gazing clear
Beyond this gloomy atmosphere
Which shuts us in with doubt and fear,

He, marking how her high increase
Ran, greatening in perpetual lease
Through balmy years of odorous peace—

Greeted in one transcendent cry
Of intense passionate ecstasy,
The sight which thrilled him utterly,

My Sword Song

Saluting, with most proud disdain
Of murder and of mortal pain,
The vision which shall be again!

So, lifted with prophetic pride,
Raised conquering hands toward heaven and cried,
“All hail the Stars and Stripes!” and died.

MY SWORD SONG

DAY in, day out, through the long campaign,
I march in my place in the ranks;
And whether it shine or whether it rain,
My good sword cheerily clanks;
It clanks and clanks in a knightly way
Like the ring of an armored heel;
And this is the song which day by day,
It sings with its lips of steel:

“O friend, from whom a hundred times,
I have felt the strenuous grip
Of the all-renouncing love that climbs
To the heights of fellowship;
Are you tired of all the weary miles?
Are you faint with your swooning limbs?
Do you hunger back for the olden smiles,
And the lilt of olden hymns?”

My Sword Song

“Has your heart grown weak since that rapt hour
When you leapt, with a single bound,
From dreaming ease to sovereign power
Of a living soul world-crowned?
Behold! the aloes of sacrifice
Are better than radiant wine,
And the bloody sweat of a cause like this
Is an agony divine.

“Under the wail of the shuddering world
Amoan for its fallen sons;
Over the volleying thunders hurled
From the throats of the wrathful guns;
Above the roar of the plunging line
That rocks with the fury of hell,
Runs the absolute voice: O Earth of mine,
Be patient, for all is well!”

Thus sings my sword to my soul, and I,
Albeit the way is long,
As soiled clouds darken athwart the sky—
Still keep my spirit strong:
Whether I live, or whether I lie
On the stained ground, ghastly and stark,
Beyond the carnage I shall descry
God's love shine across the dark.

IN BATTLE

To Abraham Lincoln

O LEADER of our sacred cause,
Twin sharer in our sadness,
Defender of our trampled laws
From perjured felon's madness—
In all our stress of mortal strife,
Our weariness and weeping,
Our hearts thank God our country's life
Is in thine honest keeping!

So blithe amid the cares of state,
So calm mid howling faction,
Clear-souled to hasten or to wait,
As fits the largest action:
With joyance, like a little child's,
Along thy grave moods straying,
And breezes as from heather wilds
In every cheery saying.

God bless the reverend lips that spake
The one grand word whose thunder
Through all the gladdened heavens brake
Our damned chains asunder!
God bless the patient hand that traced
The golden glorious pages,

Introspection

Whereby our lost crowns are replaced
For immemorial ages!

We follow where thou ledest; far
Beyond the tribulation
That drapes these dreadful years of war,
We see a newer nation,
Through balmy days of greatening power,
And nights of calm ascension,
Expand into the perfect flower
Of God's divine intention.

INTROSPECTION

[July Fourth, 1876]

THROUGHOUT the land a glad shout runs,
Pealed by a mighty nation;
Flags dance, bells ring, innocuous guns
Roar eager salutation:
With joy the bannered cities thrill;
Stored hearts unpack their treasures;
Wood, stream and valley, plain and hill,
Leap to heroic measures.

The roused air throbs with fervor, all
The places have blithe seeming;

Introspection

The meeting skies hold festival,
The sun hath brighter beaming;
The glory of one hundred years
Breaks in proud speech of thunder;
And I amid the epic cheers
Listen and brood and ponder.

I ponder o'er the days gone by
With their dead tribulations,
And see the solemn future lie
Sown thick with fresh probations,
And hear beyond the jocund noise
That rushes like a river,
The still persuasion of a Voice
Which speaks from the Forever.

O, well-beloved land, whose fame
All winds bear in their keeping,
The stately music of whose name
Far peoples are repeating,
As if the footsteps of its sound
By comfortings were followed,
And smells of Freedom from the ground
By Freedom's footsteps hallowed!

Brave things and noble hast thou done,
Staunch helpings for the human;

Introspection

Hale hopes hast strewn beneath the sun
For hopeless man and woman.
Crowned growths of grandeur have been thine,
And sunrise bursts of beauty,
And hearty draughts of God-like wine
For Man-like thirsts of duty;

And sacrifices that have wrung
The quick cords of existence,
And bloody woe of pulses strung
For battle's steeled resistance;
And wastes where heaven, black with wraths
Against thy coward lapses,
And thorny search in coiling paths
Of perilous Perhapses.

And fit it is, and wise, and well,
This dear commemoration
Of winged upstrainings out from hell,
And eras of salvation,
To let thy ecstasies run free
In flowing jubilances,
And build brave odes for liberty
And her significances.

But thou hast victories yet to win,
Harsh roads of pain to travel,

Introspection

With stress without and strife within,
Beset by beast and devil,
Before thy bruised feet crest the heights
That kiss the world's blue coping,
And heaven for thee and thine ignites
The altars of thy hoping.

Thine affluent realms that stretch away
From ocean unto ocean;
Thy subtle lightnings that obey
Thy right hand's finest motion;
Thy ships that walk the utmost waves;
Thy thronging sways and splendors;
Thy consecrated household graves;
Thine hero-eyed defenders—

These are not thy finalities,
They are the tools for hewing
Thine august spiritual destinies,
Else thine aghast undoing:
For lo! unless the inward Soul
Subdue the outward greatness,
The worms of ruin sap the whole
Foredoomed for desolateness.

Full oft, on palace lintel-posts,
Whereat Success stands vaunting,

Wanted: Joshua

The fingers of invisible ghosts
Write the dread verdict—Wanting!
And though the plaudits and the praise
Of all men rise before thee,
Unmoved, a spirit waits always
To mark if thou art worthy.

Like whips, thy missed ideals urge
Fate's hounding Nemesis;
Like cliffs, thy breezy gardens verge
On fathomless abysses;
The pillared cloud may burst in doom,
The shining wing may darken,
The flaming guidance may consume—
O, land beloved, hearken!

WANTED : JOSHUA

WHEN God, whose courtlier crowns did wait
The forehead of our Moses, drew
His steps where Pisgah shot up straight
As a Seer's thought into the blue
Of the immaculate heavens, and fed
The life-long hunger of his eyes
With one swift vision that struck him dead
For awe of its sublimities:—

Wanted: Joshua

And we turned instant unto you,
 (Calling you Joshua), to complete
The meanings of the paths which grew
 So sharp to our unsandaled feet,
I swear we thought the living soul
 Of that great prophet wrought afresh
In you, like thunder, to control
 To sovereign ends our drooping flesh.

Were not you with us when God clave
 The Red Sea, with a blow, in twain?
Were you not of us when he gave
 Manna, and quails, and blessed rain?
And those tall pillars which he yoked
 For service—did you see them not?
And all the alien blood that soaked
 The paths he hewed—is that forgot?

When crested Sinai cracked in flame,
 And all the desert round about
Shook with the dreadness of his Name
 Whose glory paled the sunlight out;
Did not you tremble with the rest,
 When his imperatives blazed forth
Along the tablets, to attest
 The Absolute unto the Earth?

Wanted: Joshua

Whence—when the Lord smote hip and thigh
The Hittite and the Amelekite—
Did you draw warrant to deny
To him the issues of the fight?
By what prerogative do you
Defraud the heavens of those results
Which ripened when we overthrew
Hell's battering rams and catapults?

I think you are not Joshua, but
Aaron art—he whose atheist hands,
Unclean as sin with worldly smut,
Reared, when God lightened o'er the lands,
A poor vain idol, unto which,
Reaching imploring arms, he caught
A curse that burned like molten pitch,
As symbol of his special Thought.

Are your hands lifted toward the sun,
What time our onsets wax and wane?
Do you see troops of angels run
In shining armor o'er the plain?
I know not; but I know, full sooth,
No wrath of hell, nor rage of man,
Nor recreant servant of the Truth,
Can balk us of our Canaan.

A BLACK MAN'S ANSWER

WELL, if it be true, as you assert,
That this is a land for the white man's rule,
And not for "niggers," does that import
That our God is the white man's fool?

"Two peoples? The hammers and heats of war
Have forged and fused, like welded links,
The fates of the twain in one; we are
For you, the riddle of the Sphinx.

"And you must solve us, unless again,
Over the burning marl of woe
Where never falleth the blessed rain,
Hell-dragged you want to go.

"When the scythes of slaughter swung in blood
And fair green fields of men were mown,
Did not our black limbs dapple the sod
With streams as red as your own?

"But not for this do we look in your face,
White man, and ask, with hungry eyes,
My brother! give us a little space
To work in under the skies!

Emancipation

“ We are not mendicants: we are Souls !

The soul that thrilled in Shakespeare, and
Lit Lincoln's lips with living coals,
Thrills us here where we stand.

“ We try to use our wings and fly;

We try to use our limbs and run;
Do you hold mortmain over the sky,
Over the earth and the sun ?

“ Your apples are of Hesperides;

You give us those of Tantalus;
But what if the Lord should blight your trees
And mock you as you mock us ? ”

EMANCIPATION

THANK God, thank God, we do not flinch

A single hair's-breadth from the way,
Nor lose the thousandth of an inch

Of royal manhood on this day!

Thank God, the words are calm and strong

And keenly tempered with the truth,
While ringing like a battle song,

All proud, of fiery-hearted youth!

Emancipation

By Heaven! it sweeps through every soul
With its majestic, rhythmic tread,
As tho' it were the thunder-roll
Of God's worlds marching overhead;
So high above our petty reach
Along the listening heights it passed,
Brimful of burning inner speech
As Paul when Felix stood aghast.

Our spirits, starting from their sleep
Into a crowned and regal mood,
Cleave on like light across the deep
Of silence and of solitude;
And, with the sweat upon our brows,
Stand strong again beside you there
In quick acceptance of the vows,
As from Christ's tomb white-winged were.

O, hearts that sickened at the wrong!
O, eyes that strained for the right!
O, weary lives whose bitter song
Swelled upward to the infinite!
O! mothers waiting for your sons!
O sons whose clenched lips never smile!
O dreary hearts of drooping ones,
Be patient for a little while.

How Long?

For sure as God's Evangel moves
The hidden pulses of the spheres,
So surely do the unseen loves
Thrill onward thro' the greatening years:
And as we keep our loftiest faith,
Our kingly hopes, our sacred pledge,
The crown of truth that freedom hath
Hangs now upon the morning's edge.

HOW LONG?

HOW long, O God, how long
Must fettered Freedom writhe beneath her chains,
And send the wailing of the captive's song
Across the purple plains?

How long, O God, how long
Shall Slavery's blood-hounds hold her by the throat,
And her life reel beneath the dripping thong
Of Hell's Iscariot?

How long, O God, how long
Shall she be haunted, homeless, thro' the Earth;
Nor thou—Just One—against the crimson wrong,
Launch Thy broad lightnings forth?

How Long?

O have thine eyes not seen
With what high trust she bore her bitter shames;
Nor marked how calm and God-like and serene
She stood amid the flames?

O have thine ears not heard
Her long low gasp of inarticulate prayer,
When livid hate, with redly reeking sword,
Has clutched her by the hair?

O did'st Thou not look down
Upon her cruel buffetings of scorn,
And watch her temples stream beneath the crown,
Made of the mocking thorn?

And dost Thou not discern
How the fierce, pitiless rabble casteth lots
For her white robes—alas! so rent and torn,
And smeared with purple spots?

O when she held the cup,
On those wild nights of her Gethsemane;—
Father in Heaven, did she not still look up,
Firm and unmoved—to Thee?

And when the bloody sweat
Oozed from the blue veins of her shuddering limbs,

Rally!

Was not the burning clasp of agony met
With calm triumphant hymns?

O, if she be Thy child,
And Thou art God, burst now this dread eclipse,
And let her pass forth, free and undefiled,
With Thy breath on her lips.

RALLY !

Inscribed to the ex-soldiers and sailors of the Union armies and
navies, 1872.

O, COMRADES, who rose in your grandeur and
might,

When the land of our love was in danger,
And Liberty girdled your loins for the fight
As you sprang to protect and avenge her;
O, brothers, whose tread, like the thunder of God,
Shook city and mountain and valley—
Once more the old bugle-notes echo abroad,
And once more our country cries, Rally!

Not now with the banners of battle unrolled,
The steel-fronted ranks standing steady;
Not now with the terrible calmness of old,
When the guns were unlimbered and ready;

Rally!

Not now with the heats as when columns were sped
For bloodiest taking and giving—
But only with Honor for all of our Dead,
And Justice for all of our Living.

Bring ballots, not bullets—bring spirits that burn
With noble and knightly endeavor,
To keep our bright harvests of Progress unshorn
By a sheaf, of their fullness forever.
Bring love that can pardon the sorrowful past,
Bring hopes that are broad as our border;
But bring the old Manhood which, unto the last,
Stood Alp-like for Union and Order!

We fought, and we conquered—they fought, and they
fell—
And Freedom arose in her beauty;
But our swords were not edged with the rancors of hell—
They were sharpened for Country and Duty.
The sternest and swiftest when armies are launched,
And the onset of daring is shouted,
Are tender as women when wounds should be staunch'd
For the broken and ruined and routed.

We cherish no hatreds—our breath is as sweet
As the smell of the midsummer clover;
When the arms of our foemen were stacked at our feet,
That moment our anger was over.

Rally!

Wrath softened to pity the instant their cry
Took form of alarm and disaster,
And we buried our ire in the grave of the Lie
Above whose dark corpse we stood Master.

Our hurts are as nothing—our gashes and scars
Are worn without boastings and shamings:—
What have men who have climbed to the steeps of the
stars
To do with Earth's vauntings and claimings?
But the Altars of Righteousness reared on the mounds
Where our canonized heroes lie sleeping—
Not a stone must be touched while the sun swings his
rounds,
And our sabres are still in our keeping!

From your fields, then, and firesides, from workshops
and plow,
O, comrades, come forth in your splendor,
Recrowning the Victor and Saver whom now
Our temples demand as Defender!
Fling out the great cry which you flung when the breath
Of the cannon blew hot in your faces:—
One Banner, one Being, one Freedom, one Faith,
For immutable bulwark and basis!

IN MEMORIAM

Read at the Annual Encampment of Pennsylvania Departm
Grand Army of the Republic, Pittsburg, January 26, 1876.

G REAT Greece hath her Thermopylæ,
Stout Switzerland her Tell;
The Scott his Wallace heart—and we
Have saints and shrines as well.
The graves of glorious Marathon
Are green above the dead,
And we have battle-fields whereon
The grass at root is red.

Not only in the grizzled past
Tingled heroic blood;
Not only were its swart sons cast
In knightly mold and mood;
Altar of sacrifice perfumed
Our hot, sulphuric air;
And Sidney's shining manhood bloomed
Around us everywhere.

Brands, regnant as the stainless sword
That grazed King Arthur's thigh,

In Memoriam

What time our battle instincts stirred,
 Flashed bare beneath the sky;
We felt the rowels of honor prick
 As keenly as did he
Who sowed his savage epoch thick
 With perfect chivalry.

Cœur-de-lions on every field,
 Sweet saints in every home,
Through whose dear helping stood revealed
 The joy of martyrdom—
Compassed by whose assuring loves,
 Our comrades dared and died
As blithely as a bridegroom moves
 To meet his glowing bride.

Though tears be salt, and wormwood yet
 Is bitter to the taste,
God's heart is tender, and doth let
 No sorrow fail or waste.
O, mothers of our Gracchi! when
 You gave your jewels up,
A continent of hopeless men
 Grew rich in boundless hope.

Renown stands mute beside the graves
 With which the land is scarred;

In Memoriam

Unheralded our splendid braves
Went forth unto the Lord;
No poet hoards their humble names
In his immortal scrolls,
But not the less the darkness flames
With their illumined souls.

Beneath the outward havoc, they
The inward mercy saw;
High intuitions of duty lay
On them as strong as law;
Beyond the bloody horizon
They marked the soft rains stored,
And heard heaven's tranquil voices run
When earth's fierce cannon roared.

O, little mounds that cost so much!
We compass what you teach;
And our worse grossness feels the touch
Of your uplifting speech.
You thrill us with the thoughts that flow
In Eucharistic wine,
And by our holy dead we know
That life is still divine.

SALVETE MILITES !

Read at the Army of the Cumberland Reunion, 1873.

WELCOME! and when we say it, we pack our
 hearts in the saying,
Just as we did in the days war-crested, flaming and
 thunderous,
When half the people were fighting and half the people
 were praying,
And slowly from crimson quags the granite of Peace
 grew under us.

Ah, those were lofty days when, straight through our
 mincing and canting,
The Soul of the Nation flashed, and gripped the hilt of
 its brand,
And drained its aloes like wine, and strode forth, kindled
 and panting,
Hewing, in forest of Lies, clear space for the Truth to
 stand.

Ah, those were mighty days! mighty for stress and for
 sorrow,
And mighty for regnant Manhood that turned them to
 glory and gain;

Salvete Milites !

What would have been the cast of Humanity's crowned
to-morrow,

Save for our yesterdays of turbulent passion and pain ?

Save for the vivid swords which our reverent hearths
are keeping,

Save for the eloquent guns that held high faith with the
State,

Save for the heroes that sleep, and those who pass to
their sleeping,

Save for the dead that are shrined and for the living
who wait ?

This is our time of thrift, of Commerce, and Art, and of
Science,

And Nature, our nursing-mother, healeth the hurts of
war:

But the luster lights of our years are the sacrificial
giants

Who clave our blackness asunder and beacons us
where we are.

Thomas, poised Titan of Battle; and Sheridan, Wrath's
Archangel;

And Grant, whose Cosmic purpose not Chaos itself
could shake;

Salvete Milites !

And lance-like Sherman, who spurred with the Century's
sharp evangel

Into our century's drowse, and clarioned Sloth awake.

And Hooker climbing the clouds where his quarry
perched above him;

And Meade, Disciple of Duty—our hearts bend over his
grave;

And plumed McPherson the splendid, the true Heavens
guard him and love him;

And the scepterless kings of the ranks—the vast, un-
laureled brave !

Living or dead, Earth thrills with their luminous fervor
of spirit;

Living or dead, their blood hath entered into our veins;
Their voice—the nebulous stars of the pinnacled firmament hear it;

Their work—in the nethermost pits its august influence
reigns.

For what are our times and spaces? Leonidas greeted
Warren;

Under our scarlet fields great Marathon's secret ran.
Nothing is past or future, nothing is hidden or foreign.
The speech of Freedom is one, and one is the soul of
Man.

OF LIBERTY AND CHARITY

O, wherefore should ill ever flow from ill,
And pain still keener pain forever breed?
We all are brethren ; even the slaves who kill
For hire are men ; and do avenge misdeed
On the misdoer, doth but Misery feed
With her own broken heart.

—SHELLEY.

I.

SO sang the wondrous singer all compact
Of inspiration and prophetic fire ;
All built of instincts whose divineness tracked
Music to its first springs, and did acquire
The secret of the Everlasting Fact,
To which the poets of the world aspire,
And made the land which chased him o'er the seas
Drunk with the wine of his fierce melodies.

II.

He, being dead, yet speaketh ; his great songs
Run up and down the listening Universe
Whitening the cheeks of Tyrannies and Wrongs,
Smiting Oppression with a lyric curse ;
Fusing the alien thoughts of alien throngs
So that they dwell in spiritual intercourse,
And breathing like a sweet wind of the south
On wan lips wasted by the troublous drouth

Of Liberty and Charity

III.

While lasts the language, his high hymns shall last;
While stirs the heroic impulse, he shall stir
The hearts of many like a bugle blast;
And as the steed doth quicken to the spur,
Men's souls shall quicken when his strains have passed
Into their pulses, and grow worthier
Of that ineffable beauty which he saw
With his clear eyes of tenderness and awe.

IV.

On him the sense of human brotherhood
Lay like a Prophet's burden; if there ran
Immortal maledictions in his blood
For whatsoever desecrated Man—
Nathless a lute-like voice of pity wooed
The foolish evil-doer. His stern ban
Was for the sin—upon the sinner's lips
He laid the kisses of clean fellowships.

V.

To him the stature of a man was as
The stature of an angel; he could see—
Albeit but dimly, as through darkened glass—
Gleams of a dread and awful sanctity
Crowning the spotted foreheads, which, alas!
Scarce felt their solemn crowning. Equally

Of Liberty and Charity

He looked on kings and beggars; on the attaint
As on the hero and the praying saint.

VI.

He saw Heaven's rivers of compassion roll
To the uttermost ends of Being; and he strove
With all the hoarded splendor of his soul
To make the lean earth bless itself with Love,
And crown itself with Love's grand aureole,
Whereby the rhythmic garlands which he wove
Were wonderful for beauty—iris-hued
With the great glow of God's infinitude.

VII.

Thou wingéd Spirit, eagle-plumed for power,
And flight beyond the daring of the eye!
We have sore need of thee in this dark hour,
When all the wells of kindness are drained dry,
And popular passion rages to deflower
The popular Conscience, and make Victory
The procuress of Vengeance, and the lusts
Of dragon-eyed suspicions and mistrusts.

VIII.

Let Liberty run onward with the years,
And circle with the seasons; let her break

Of Liberty and Charity

The tyrant's harshness, the oppressor's spears;
Bring ripened recompenses that shall make
Supreme amends for sorrow's long arrears;
Drop holy benison on hearts that ache;
Put clearer radiance into human eyes,
And set the glad earth singing to the skies.

IX.

Let her voice thunder at the doors of kings,
And lighten in black dungeons. Let her breath
Stir the dry bones of peoples till there springs
Life's fruitful vigor out of barren death,
And, roused, vast millions clap triumphant wings
O'er the mean devils which have hindered faith;
And men's tall growths of excellence express
Invincible, puissant nobleness.

X.

But let her do all worthily; let not
The foul contagions of our selfishness
Stain her immaculate purity, nor blot
The brightness of her vesture, nor make less
The marvelous divineness of her thought,
Nor the rapt wisdom of her utterances,
Nor that orb'd splendor of her perfect light,
Which is God's morning promised to the night.

Of Liberty and Charity

XI.

And ye, O sovran people of the land,
Crowned with her benedictions, lifted up
From chaos and low tracts of shifting sand,
And owlish places wherein ye did grope,
To the delectable mountains which command
Far visions of your sanctuaries of hope—
Be yet to Mercy and to Love as true
As Love and Mercy have been unto you.

XII.

Behold! the things are possible to these
Which are not possible to wrath; they bear
The secret of the laden mysteries
Piled like packed doom in the thick-boding air;
At their fair girdles hang the mystic keys
Which unlock inmost meanings; their brows wear
The sole serenities that consecrate
The masters of the subtle sphinx of Fate.

XIII.

Clean natures coin pure statutes. Let us cleanse
The hearts that beat within us; let us mow
Clear to the roots our falseness and pretense,
Tread down our rank ambitions, overthrow
Our braggart moods of puffed self-consequence,
Plow up our hideous thistles which do grow

Retrospective and Introspective

Faster than maize in May-time, and strike dead
The base infections our low greeds have bred.

XIV.

For lo! our climbing purpose is in vain,
In vain the vivid speech that glows and burns,
In vain our throes of sacrificial pain;
Empty of hand our Liberty returns
From the broad fields where waves her golden grain;
Balked of its future our sad presence mourns;
Baffled is all our being until we
On Freedom's august brows write Charity.

RETROSPECTIVE AND INTROSPECTIVE

I.

I SIT alone in silentness,
And dream, and muse, and ponder;
Re-live the days of battle-stress,
Re-tread the fields of thunder;
Re-walk the wastes where Carnage fed
His hounds, with blood for water;
Re-view the cities of the dead,
The bivouacs of slaughter.

Retrospective and Introspective

I see the desolated homes,
The ruined altar-places,
The symbols of dread martyrdoms
Written in women's faces;
I hear the sonless father's sighs,
The bereaved mother's praying,
The little children's sobbing cries,
Orphaned amid their playing.

I mark the myriad souls that swoon
Beneath War's cruel splinters;
The widowed lives that dwell alone
In everlasting winters;
The unkissed lips which never shall
Be kissed on any morrow;
The hopeless eyes so terrible
With unavailing sorrow.

I see the lifting of the ban
Our evil-doing brought us;
The clearer views of Life and Man
Which Heaven's swift justice taught us.
I watch the homeward-hastening feet
Of crowned and laureled legions,
And thrill beneath the calms that greet
The aching battle-regions.

Retrospective and Introspective

II.

O Northmen, brothers! were not we
Copartners in the sinning?
Have we been leal to Liberty
Through all, from the beginning?
Did we upon no trembling slave
The shackles ever rivet?
Give others that which ye I gave,
Saith God—but do we give it?

If by the Lord's high Fatherhood
The black man is our brother,
Dare our unfilial arms exclude
The white man for another?
Are we so clean that we dare scowl
On any one attainted?
While we brand other hearts as foul,
Have ours indeed repented?

Shall we who toadied to the Wrong
In sycophantic meekness,
What time its loins were broad and strong,
Play tyrant in its weakness?
Have we who, in our by-gone days,
Ran liveried beside it,
No covert in the untrodden ways,
Where pitying Death may hide it?

Retrospective and Introspective

Could we drain dry the bitter cup
Of life's humiliation,
Without one tender word of hope,
Or love's extenuation?
Have we no honorable faith
For those whose swords are broken?
Conditions?—must our shibboleth
By all the world be spoken?

III.

No man can climb so close to God
But needeth to beseech Him,
Nor lapse so far toward devilhood
That mercy can not reach him;
We stand, with all, on level ground,
In equal human fashion,
Encompassed by the blue profound
Of Infinite Compassion!

Shake hands, then, o'er the rusted swords,
O, blood-bedraggled nation;
Smile down the past with sweet accords
Of reconciliation;
Walk brotherly and lovingly
The upward paths of duty,
And let the kings and tyrants see
A People's kingly beauty!

IO TRIOMPHE !

NOT ever, in all human time,
Did any man or nation
Plant foot upon the peaks sublime
Of Mount Transfiguration,
But first, in long preceding hours
Of dread and solemn Being,
Crashed battle 'gainst Satanic powers,
Alone with The All-Seeing.

God's glory lights no mortal brows
Which sorrow hath not wasted;
No wine hath He for lips of those
His lees who never tasted.
Nor ever, till in bloodiest stress
The heart is well approvèd,
Does the All-brooding Tenderness
Cry, This is my Beloved!

O land through years of shrouded nights
In triple blackness groping
Toward the far prophetic lights
That beacon the world's hoping,—

Io Triomphe!

Behold! no tittle shalt thou miss
Of that transforming given
To all who, dragged to hell's abyss,
Hold fast their grip on heaven.

The Lord God's purpose throbs along
Our stormy turbulences;
He keeps the sap of nations strong
With hidden recompenses.
The Lord God sows His righteous grain
In battle-blasted furrows,
And draws from present days of pain
Large peace for calm to-morrows.

Brothers! beneath our brimming tears
Lies nobler cause for singing
Than ever in the shining years
When all our vales were ringing
With happy sounds of mellow Peace,
And all our cities thundered
With lusty echoes, and our seas
By freighted keels were sundered.

For lo! the branding flails that drave
Our husks of foul self from us,
Show all the watching heavens we have
Immortal grain of promise;

Io Triomphe!

And lo! the dreadful blasts which blew
In gusts of fire amid us,
Have scorched and winnowed from the true
The Falseness that undid us.

No floundering more, for mind or heart,
Among the lower levels;
No welcome more for moods that sort
With satyrs and with devils;
But over all our fruitful slopes,
On all our plains of beauty,
Fair temples for fair human hopes,
And altar-thrones for Duty.

Wherefore, O ransomed people, shout;
O banners, wave in glory;
O bugles, blow the triumph out,
O drums, strike up the story.
Clang! broken fetters, idle swords
Clap hands, O States, together;
And let all praises be the Lord's,
Our Savior and our Father!

THE JOY GUN

BORNE on the wings of the Northern breeze,
Wafted on airs from happy seas,
The word of the Lord by His servant's mouth
Came to the bondsmen of the South,
And young and old, with a sudden cry,
Answered, "Yea, Master, here am I."

With the dread of his old life shuddering through him,
With the hope of his new life beckoning to him,
In his heart the goad of the troubled eyes
Of those whose prayers flew on before him,
And a vast, vague dream of broad free skies
Bending like God's dear pity o'er him,
The black man looked in our general's face,
Speaking his word for himself and race.

He was only a black man—grim and **gaunt**,
Torn and tattered, and lean from want,
Mixed with the slime of the oozing fen
Wherein he had crouched from tiger-men;
Poor and ignorant, mean and low,
Blossom of ages of shame and woe,
Cowed by scourges and chains and whips,

The Joy Gun

Starved of bountiful fellowships;
Dull of feeling, heavy of brain,
Dead to the finer spiritual sense
Which through the white man's passion and pain
Sees that the heavens are clear, and thence
God shining on us. Only a slave
With the ache in his breast which dumb souls have.

But, as he stood there, bare of head,
Telling the Union general
How his people rose and fled
Out from the very gates of hell
Into the darkness, into the night,
Through terrible leagues of mortal flight,
Past forest and thicket, swamp and flood,
Leaving a trail of human blood;
And how he, too, had crawled and crept
Through the armed watch the enemy kept
To see for his brethren hidden there,
Down in the jungles' fastnesses,
Whether indeed a pathway were
Open to freedom for him and his;
And how they waited with straining ear,
And hearts on tiptoe of hope and fear,
To catch the throb of the "blessed gun"
Which he prayed might shout to them, all was won;
The general said it should be done.

The Joy Gun

Oh ! it was wonderful to trace
How, o'er his black and stolid face
Shot, like an instant gleam from the sun,
A pained rapture, an awful grace,
An august look in his lifted eyes,
'Tranced with a vision through which there brake
The self-same Infinite voice which spake
To the dead Lazarus, saying, " Arise !"
So was the human soul within him
Drawn from its hideous sepulcher
To where archangels might woo and win him,
And the breath of the Lord be comforter.
So from his brow like a cowl there slid
The stagnate seeming of sullen care,
In the dark of which had the man lain hid—
A new life to the roots of his hair;
The glory of God eclipsed the brute,
And the slave fell dead at the freedman's foot.

Oh, gun of freedom! that then and there
Poured for the fainting fugitives
Oil of gladness upon despair,
Healing balm upon bruised lives.
Albeit thou speakest but once, I know
That thy grand thunder shall never die,
But gather an ampler voice, and grow
In greatening echoes around the sky,

We Need You Not

Over the hurtling shouts of war,
Landward and seaward, near and far,
Till every tyranny reels and rocks,
Smitten to hell by mighty shocks,
And the wasted hearts of the weary rouse,
Springborn, from desolate wintry drowse,
And its blessed billows of music roll
To shackled body and thrall'd soul,
Slave and master, bond and free,
Till the whole earth, Lord, lies pure in Thee.

WE NEED YOU NOT

OUT of the way there! ye who stand
Between us and the blessed light
That streams up where the promised land
Dawns faint and far upon our sight.

Out of the way there! ye who call
Our faith and works too bold and hot;
We move in column like a wall!
Out of the way! We need you not.

Out of the way there! ye who give
Your free hopes reaching to the skies,
For that poor, trembling fugitive—
The thing ye call a "Compromise."

We Need You Not

Out of the way there! ye who fear
To accept the right or choose the wrong!
Out of the way there—insincere!
And let the people pass along.

Out of the way there! ye who think
God's battles can be bought and sold;
God's voices silenced by the chink
Of silver, or the touch of gold!
Back to the safety which befits
Your smooth lips and your scented words;
Out of the way there—hypocrites!
For this is Truth's hour and the Lord's.

What! shall our souls that saw and heard
The living covenant of God,
And marked His Angel's flaming sword
In all the places that we trod,
Shall we tear off the crowns that press
Our foreheads as the touch of stars,
And, for your velvet littleness,
Give up our grand old battle-scars?

Out of the way! ye can not buy
Our Israel with your subtle creeds,
While all the wilderness doth lie
In manna for our human needs!

The Question

Back to your fleshpots and your chains,
Your brackish waters and your thirst.
Thank God our manhood still remains!
Stand back! we will not be accurst.

THE QUESTION

“**A** MEN!” I cried in battle time,
When my beautiful heroes perished,—
The earth of the Lord shall bloom sublime
By the blood of its martyrs nourished.
“Amen!” I said, when their limbs were hewn,
And their wounds showed blue and ghastly;
The strength of a man may fail and swoon,
But the truth shall conquer lastly.

And “Amen!” I cried, when victory’s hymn
Swelled over our crown’d banners;
When our eyes with the blinding tears were dim,
Because of our heart’s hosannas;
But I will not basely stab my death
With a poniard-stroke whilst giving
Amen to the lie that seeks to spread
Its black wrong over the living.

The Question

If you shake clean hands with the truth you shall
Read life's essential meaning,
And through the apocalyptical
Vineyards of light walk gleaming;
But not in the traffic-mongering marts
Where you place a market value
On the Christward aching of human hearts,
Hath His angel ought to tell you.

You think that your opaque eyes are one
With the eagle's eyes for vigor,
While you turn your back on the truth, and shun
Its light with a curse for the "nigger."
You prate of mercy and—cotton bales,
But I fancy you are not minded
That justice, holding the awful scales,
Being blind, is color-blinded.

Can you patch a cloak for your nakedness
With shreds of your own contriving?
Will your shoddy endure the strain and stress
Of the looms that the gods are driving?
Behold the winds of the Lord shall tear
Your beggarly rags in sunder,
And leave you shivering, shamed, and bare
To the search of its packéd thunder.

Our Lessons

Will you drowse your lives with a new pretense,
Ere the blood is dry in the valleys
That were lately soaked for the old offense;
Will you learn anew what hell is?
Do you think that the grapes of God will slip
Out of reach when you are sated,
Or that of his sovran mastership
One jot will be abated?

From the unsung graves where our heroes died
In a regnant scorn of dying;
From souls that out of the dark have cried
Through ages of bitter crying;
From the solemn heavens, where all must stand,
Calling to every spirit,
A voice sweeps warning across the land,—
O brothers! let us hear it!

OUR LESSONS

Read Before the Army of Potomac Society, Harrisburg, Pa.,
May 12, 1874.

WELL, we acknowledge it; we admit
That peace is blessed, that war is awful,
And when we nobly compass it
The gain of commerce is fair and lawful.

Our Lessons

We grant that sickles and pruning hooks
Are better than swords and battle-axes;
And wine and honey, and art and books,
Sweeter than wounds and debts and taxes.

But still, if by treacherous yielding chance
The land hath trafficked its splendid anger
For only a lean inheritance
Of outward lustness and inward languor,
Why then, O comrades, it were full well
If the shocks of our armies were not over;
For the Lord made men to conquer Hell,
And not to fatten like kine in clover.

Our thrifts that crown us, our calms that fold
Our strength far stretching to the Equator,
Are less than our simplest hurts of old,
Except as Liberty makes them greater.
O riddled banners! O rusted guns!
Your grandeur moves in endless shining,
Because wherever our Empire runs
Manhood and law run intertwining.

If the loud pæans o'er shotless guns
Mean also glory unto the Father,
So that wherever our border runs
Justice and mercy may run together;

Our Lessons

Why, then I answer that every song
You sing to the sweet peace brooding o'er us,
Cleaving the ether shall bear along
The added burden of my weak chorus.

Behold! our culminant battle-cries
Climb to the sapphire-crested portals!
We hold clean covenant with the skies,
Fair faith with the pinnacled immortals!
And lo! the thunderous blasts that blew
In sulphurant gusts of fire amid us,
Scorched and winnowed the breasted true
From the frontal falseness that undid us.

The Master's purposes throb along
Our stoniest wraths of turbulences;
He stayeth the sap of Peoples strong
With hidden rigors and recompenses;
For He scatters His everlasting grain
In bloodiest, war-drenched field and furrows;
And reaps from Yesterday's woe and pain,
Peace for the larger world's to-morrows.

Let all the loud voices radiant shout!
Ye clustering flags move on in glory!
Brave bugles blow the victories out!
Beat drums, the imperishable story!

Justice or Trade

While olden foemen, with new accords
Of knightliest reconciliation,
Clasp hands across innoxious swords
Wedded to our great hero-nation.

JUSTICE OR TRADE

THAN this no further, I am afeared.
I see an Infinite splendor waiting;
I see an Infinite Terror reared;
I see a people hesitating
Between a narrowing shibboleth
And a cry that climbs to the sapphire portals,
Between low pacts that are crammed with death
And a covenant with the Immortals.

For God's dread tongues of terrible fire,
Eating the darkness that plucked our vitals,
And cast us prone in the hungry mire,
Achoke with agony—what requitals?
Behold in lowliest human guise
The Master standeth; the hour is going;
We look with straight incredulous eyes;
Our false lips move, and the cock is crowing.

The Grand Army

Certes, our creditors need their dues,
But also the Heavens will have just payment.
If they arraign us, I think we lose
All, and not merely food and raiment.
It hurts (does it not?) when the flaming knives
Of a mad assasssin hew and stab us?
Well, when the messenger arrives,
Shall we send the Nazarene or Barabbas?

THE GRAND ARMY

Written for and sung in G. A. R. Posts as part of the Ritual.

FROM eastern sea to western shore,
Loyally, right loyally,
And breasted like the knights of yore,
Royally, yes, royally,
Roused by the rebel cannon roar,
Our columns thickened more and more,
With prayers behind and faith before,
Rose the Union's Army Grand.

From hall and hut, from near and far,
Readily, most readily,
We sprang unto the cry of war,
Steadily, right steadily.

The Grand Army

Stung by the crime that we abhor,
We girded on our armor for
Deliverance of the nation, or
Soldier's death on honor's field.

Through sun and gloom, through field and flood,
Gloriously, yes, gloriously,
We pressed our path in wounds and blood,
Victoriously, victoriously;
Graves grew beneath us where we stood;
By every vale, and mount, and wood,
They wait the reveille of God—
Soldiers of that Army Grand.

Heaven rest our comrades in their graves,
Lovingly, most lovingly;
Heaven beam upon our living braves,
Approvingly, approvingly;
And oh! where'er our banner waves,
Freedom shall beckon unto slaves,
So long as God protects and saves
What the Grand old Army won.

THE DEFENSE OF LAWRENCE

[Written after hearing the account given the poet on his arrival in Kansas, early in the fall of 1856, of the resistance made in September of that year to the last pro-slavery attack on Lawrence, Kansas, when a small number of Free State men successfully held the place against 2,400 armed Missourians, and drove back their advance of 300 men.]

ALL night upon the guarded hill,
Until the stars were low,
Wrapped round as with Jehovah's will,
We waited for the foe;
All night the silent sentinels
Moved by like gliding ghosts;
All night the fancied warning bells
Held all men to their posts.

We heard the sleeping prairies breathe,
The forest's human moans,
The hungry gnashing of the teeth
Of wolves on bleaching bones;
We marked the roar of rushing fires,
The neigh of frightened steeds,
The voices as of far-off lyres
Among the river reeds.

The Defense of Lawrence

We were but thirty-nine who lay
Beside our rifles then;
We were but thirty-nine, and they
Were twenty hundred men.
Our lean limbs shook and reeled about,
Our feet were gashed and bare,
And all the breezes shredded out
Our garments in the air.

Sick, sick of all the woes which spring
Where falls the Southron's rod,
Our very souls had learned to cling
To freedom as to God;
And so we never thought of fear
In all those stormy hours,
For every mother's son stood near
The awful, unseen powers.

And twenty hundred men had met
And swore an oath of hell,
That, ere the morrow's sun might set,
Our smoking homes should tell
A tale of ruin and of wrath,
And damning hate in store,
To bar the freeman's western path
Against him evermore.

The Defense of Lawrence

They came: the blessed Sabbath day,
That soothed our swollen veins,
Like God's sweet benediction, lay
On all the singing plains;
The valleys shouted to the sun,
The great woods clapped their hands,
And joy and glory seemed to run
Like rivers through the lands.

And then our daughters and our wives,
And men whose heads were white,
Rose sudden into kingly lives
And walked forth to the fight;
And we drew aim along our guns
And calmed our quickening breath,
Then, as is meet for Freedom's sons,
Shook loving hands with Death.

And when three hundred of the foe
Rode up in scorn and pride,
Whoso had watched us then might know
That God was on our side,
For all at once a mighty thrill
Of grandeur through us swept,
And strong and swiftly down the hill
Like Gideons we leapt.

The Defense of Lawrence

And all throughout that Sabbath day
A wall of fire we stood,
And held the baffled foe at bay,
And streaked the ground with blood.
And when the sun was very low
They wheeled their stricken flanks,
And passed on, wearily and slow,
Beyond the river* banks.

Beneath the everlasting stars
We bended child-like knees,
And thanked God for the shining scars
Of his large victories;
And some, who lingered, said they heard
Such wondrous music pass
As though a seraph's voice had stirred
The pulses of the grass.

* The Wakarusa, Kansas.

“WE WILL SUBDUE YOU”

Reply to a Southern threat in 1856.

GO tell it to the slaves that quake
Amid your canefields and your swamps;
Go hiss it to the hearts you break
Beneath your scornful midnight lamps;
With curses out from cruel lips,
With tortures and with threats to kill,
And damned stripes from streaming whips
Subdue your chattels to your will.

But never speak these words to us
Who claim free breath on Freedom's soil,
Lest on your heads the slanderous
Black lie of infamy recoil.
We owe no fealty to you
Whose gold is slippery with the gore
Your cleaving knives and scourges drew
From the gashed souls you lord it o'er.

There breathes no driver in your clime,
Tho belted to the ribs with steel,
And choked with slavery's foul slime,
Of whom we dare not think and feel,

“ We Will Subdue You ”

And speak, too, as the truth shall list,
In tones that scorch and words that warn,
Till pelted, pilloried and hissed,
He slinketh from the People's scorn.

Subdue ye those who spring from men
That Mayflower brought o'er the seas,
Who heard God talking with them, when,
Beneath their bent and praying knees,
The wintry rocks of Plymouth thrilled,
And startled like a living soul
At such deep cries of faith, that stilled
The lasht waves into calm control ?

Subdue the sons of those who fought
Their sturdy way on Bunker Hill,
Nor ever rested till they wrought
Heaven's meaning on a monarch's will!
Subdue the people who subdue
The forests and the mighty plains,
Who make the old earth ring anew
With nobler songs in higher strains!

Subdue us! well, perchance ye may
When, rising up to kindlier aims,
You cast your scowling pride away,
And wipe the tarnish from your names;

Ireland's Misrule

Yea, when you win the highest place
Of honor in these peerless wars,
Of strength and truth and princely grace,
You shall be crowned as conquerors.

We give the grasp of loving hands,
We speak the word of kindly zeal,
To all who crown the swarming lands
With larger hopes of human weal.
But while your "chivalry" begets
Such ulcers on the Nation's heart,
We break like reeds your empty threats
And stand as strangers, wide apart.

IRELAND'S MISRULE

O ENGLAND, from thy glory and greatness of old,
So cankered with Commerce, so corrupted with
gold,

So hungry for Empire, so thirsty for blood,
So cruel to Man and so false to God!

Art thou the gemmed Island whose Liberty runs
Through circles of ages and cycles of suns;
From Arthur, and Alfred, and Harold, and all
The high sources whose grandeur but deepen thy fall?

Ireland's Misrule

Art thou the brave land which the Poets have sung,
Round such a world's hopings have clustered and clung?
The beautiful land which earth's exiles hold dear?
Was Sidney thy soldier—was Shakespeare thy seer?

Did Wilberforce spring from thy loins? Was it thou
Whom Hampden called Mother, and Milton did plow
The fields of his soul for, and Russell and Vane
Made the days of Aristides blossom again?

O drugged with ambition, and sodden with pride,
And soaked with the tears which thy victims have cried,
Hypocrisy sweating from every pore,
And dabbled all over with splashes of gore!

Thy grip on the famishing throat of the Celt,
Thy foot on the shrines where his fathers have knelt;
Thy spies at his fireside, thy hounds on his track,
Thy sword in his bosom, thy stripes on his back!

But the sigh of the parent, the sob of the child,
The breasts which are milkless, the eyes that look wild,
The hunger and nakedness, sorrow and pain,
The famine of body and fever of brain,

Which—piled like a pyramid unto the skies—
Convict thee of robbery, murder, and lies,

Ireland's Misrule

Pluck bitterer woes upon thee than thy wrath,
At its blackest and worst, can hurl into his path.

Thy heel upon Ireland; but lo! upon thee
The curse of her children, wherever they be!
Thy chains on her limbs, thy clenched fist in her face,
But on thee the dark shame and damning disgrace!

Still with fire and falsehood defend as thou wilt
The wrong and the outrage, the crime and the guilt;
And still with glib rhetoric varnish the lie,
And still fling the flails of Oppression on high;

But the wrong will not prosper, the crime not endure;
For Fate—Heaven's stern headsmen—though silent, is
sure;

And never in all the long lapse of the past
Did a tyranny grow but it withered at last.

It withered and shriveled, it tottered and fell,
Mid bloody dishonor and ruin of hell;
With hisses for requiems, hootings for tears,
Accursed and abhorred through the evermore years.

Play fast and loose then, O England, and still
Make sharper the rack and more grievous the ill;
Bribe, bully and trample, defy and defraud,
Yet thou bribest not Justice, thou tramplest not God.

SONGS OF
LOVE AND
CIRCUMSTANCE

KANSAS

1856.

LIKE the soft hand of love falls the air on my brow,
And sweet are the memories clasping me now,
And holy as life is the beauty that thrills
Thro' the hearts of the valleys, the views of the hills,
And sacred my home o'er the far away sea;
Yet dearer than all is dear Kansas to me.

O she draws me and awes me with truth and with light,
As a Poet is drawn by the stars of the night,
And she touches the quick of my soul till it swims*
On a sea of pure glory and blossoming hymns.
And I love her with beauty that seems to excel
The grandeur of heaven and the terrors of hell.

But not for the lavishing riches she owns,
And not for the wealth of her mountainous thrones,
And not for the forests that girdle her streams,
Nor her plains that melt as the amber of dreams,
And not for the spirit-like swell of her slopes,
Do I crown her with all the delights of my hopes.

Kansas

But for her queenliness, shown in the time

When her raiment was soiled by the fingers of crime,
When the green of her gardens was spattered with red,
And the terraces dripped with the blood of her dead,
And her widows and orphans sat wringing their hands,
While malice and murder stalked over her lands.

For the storm which flashed from her beautiful eyes

When her peerless affection was tempted with lies;
For the blow that she dealt in the treacherous face
Of the robber and spoiler who stood in her place;
And the joy of her tears, like the sun on the mists,
When she passed to the torture with chains on her
wrists.

For the majesty wreathing the steps of her youth,

And all of her loveliness, all of her truth;
For all the deep lessons of wisdom she taught,
And for all the great deeds which her strong hands
have wrought;
O, for this do I leap at the sound of her name,
And love her with love that mounts upward like flame.

FATHER-LOVE

O EARTH is full of lovely things
Which our dear Father-God has made,
Of buds and blooms and gleaming wings,
And bursts of light and depths of shade.
O, thick across the purple skies
The wondrous flashing stars are strewn,
And bright with cherub-children's eyes
The glowing world is overgrown.

But never, in the woods at noon,
Or underneath the stars at night,
Or in the low sweet vales of June,
Or on the mountain's upper height,—
O, never thrilled my blood so much,
And never leaped my heart so wild,
As when I bowed my head to touch
The sweet lips of my first-born child.

O, in the unspeakable baptism
Of that strange love that o'er me stole,
How streamed the sacred, solemn chrism
Thro' all the fibers of my soul!

Father-Love

And every silent yearning hope
Shot outward into sudden speech,
And when I drew my horoscope
The stars were close within my reach.

Ay! and I know that evermore
I have held higher talk with heaven,
In deeper whispers than before
That large new blessedness was given.
I could not part her precious hair
Nor look upon her sacred eyes,
And not within my full soul swear
To mark her steps in Paradise.

I hear her low voice in the hall,
Her liquid laugh among the flowers;
And pulse leaps unto pulse, and all
My life goes seeking her for hours.
And when she rises to my knee
And lightly nestles toward my cheek
With love that clings so utterly,
I clasp her, but I can not speak.

O, mid the tumult of the town,
The care the canker and the doubt,
And when the flaming sun goes down,
And when the holy stars are out;

To a Friend

In the great stillness of the night,
And in the front of garish day,
She wraps me like a robe of light,
And turns to spirit all my clay.

God bless my child! I never knew
Life's vastness until she was born.
God bless my child! and keep her true
Through all her deeper-widening morn.
O, reach Thy Hand out through the years
And hold her near Thee undefiled;
And give her oil of joy for tears,
And Father, Father! bless my child.

TO A FRIEND

A MANY years have come and gone,
Dear friend, since you and I
First felt our two souls strangely drawn
Together utterly.

A many glorious promise-days,
And sacred star-crowned heights,
Since we stood thrilling in the blaze
Of new love's golden lights.

A Picture

And purely as a Sabbath psalm,
And grandly as the sea,
Throughout all moods of storm and calm,
Your soul has clung to me.

And I, amid the whirl and roar
Of strifes where I have striven,
Have kept unsinced forever more
The glory it hath given.

So, when the great waves separate
Our closely claspéd hands,
And we go forth to work and wait
In far off hopeful lands;

Then in all times of ill and good,
All hours of joy and woe,
God bless our holy brotherhood
Wherever we may go.

A PICTURE

BEAUTIFUL! beautiful! The great round moon
Hangs among the stars upon the verge of heaven,
Like a vast hope within a boundless soul

A Picture

Brimful of lofty majesty; the stars
Wait on her steps, as glowing pages wait
Upon a gorgeous queen.

Onward she sweeps,
With regal footsteps up the vaulted sky,
Beaming fair smiles on all her satellites
As on a meek suitor beams a peerless maid.
Far in the West the glowing heavens bend down
Kissing the sunset hills, as one betrothed
Embraces his beloved.

To the South and dim,
The grand old Ocean, dark and deep,
Spreads out like an eternity; one ship
With her white folded wings lies anchored there,
Like an angel sleeping on the breast of God.
Hidden in yon thicket, hark! the nightingale
Pours her wild music in the ear of night,
Till it seems drunk with joy. Hark! how the excess
Of her sweet song streams thrilling from her soul
Sweet as the music of an angel's harp
Attuned by Gabriel's hand.

How mystical
And dreamlike comes the murmur of the stream
That babbles through the valley! It is like
A virgin beauty, who in bridal dreams
Vaguely and in half words tells unto the night
The secret of her soul.

Burns

The panting breeze
Throbs tremulous on yon green hill of pines,
Like the hopeful shuddering of a stripling's heart,
Earnest, yet all untried.

Far-off I see
The red fires gleaming in the village homes,
Flashing their strange lights even at my feet,
As prophets flash their stirring flaming thoughts
Across the mists of time.

The green earth sleeps
' Neath the eye of Heaven, like a fair girl
On whose white finger the betrothal ring,
Graven with her lover's name and set with gems,
Lies glittering like the stars. For thus hath God
Put this high name upon the virgin Earth
Whom he will some day wed!

BURNS

A LITTLE bird with gorgeous wing
And notes of sweet imagining,
Carolled away one sunny spring
Carelessly wild.
In truth, he was a wanton thing,
Nature's own child!

Burns

Beneath a shady tree one day
Were met some lords and ladies gay
Who came to pass the hours away
 And time beguile,
While he upon the leafiest spray
 Sang all the while.

So soft his song, and aye so free,
So full of nature's melody
And truth and trust and sympathy,
 That those who heard
Marveled such magic notes should be
 Found in a bird.

The rich command when they entreat,
For he who sang so passing sweet
Flew down upon the ground to meet
 Their specious smiles,
And soon, alas! his little feet
 Were in the toils.

They took him to the town, and there
Displayed their wondrous prisoner
To all the noble and the fair
 Who chose to see
That native of the mountain air.
 That prodigy.

Burns

So every one who came would bring
More flattery for that songster-thing!
And then they'd ask to hear him sing.

While he complied,
They'd pluck a feather from his wing
And slyly hide!

At length, as human nature will,
They tired when they had had their fill,
Cared not to know his matchless skill,
But passed him by;
When he, disgusted with his ill,
Essayed to fly.

But ah! he could not. Never more,
Whilst sweetly singing, might he soar
Heavenward, as oft he did before.
Man's praise he drank.
Flattery from him his pinions tore
And so—he sank!

Alas! alas! Such was the fate
Of Burns, the noble, not the great.
He grasped at flattery's curséd bait,
And so his life
Was crushed beneath fell sorrow's weight
And sickening strife!

TWO

To Mary P. Nimmo

I WAS a poet; and sometimes,
When the lyric impulse touched my lips,
I sang my cheery and homely rhymes
Of simple loves and fellowships.
She was of those whose presence brings
A sense of the peace we can recall
In our far-off, angel-haunted springs,—
So I stood dreaming; that was all.

My heart was parched with terrible drouth,
Her heart with pity was dewy-sweet,
And ever around her sacred youth
All things holy and fair did meet.
O, in what meek unconscious mood
She wore the beautiful coronal
Of her perfect gracious womanhood!—
So I stood dreaming; that was all.

Closer and closer, nigher and nigher,
Something drew me each day to her,
And I dreamed (O passionate heart of fire!)
That I was not shut in a sepulcher,

Two

Stifling forever a moaning cry,
Lest haply my heaviness should fall
Upon brooding lovers passing by—
Thus I stood dreaming; that was all.

O tender face I kiss in the night,
When I glide in sleep through my prison bars,
And my spirit walks erect in the light,
In the dawn of the everlasting stars!
O, eyes of sweet austerity!
O tender voice that thrilled in the hall
Like the sound of flutes on the open sea!—
So I stand dreaming; that is all.

O serene lowliness of mien,
O balmy spiritual effluence,
That made the air about her clean
With smells of Eden-innocence,
So that all evil things in the street
Crouched, when she passed, in the shade of the wall,
That else were stricken dead at her feet!—
Yet am I dreaming; that is all.

I stand here now in the dark and think;
I kneel here now in the dark, and pray:
“O Father! I will be strong to drink
My bitter aloes, if thou always

Byron

Wilt shine on the paths her feet must tread,
So that no hurt nor harming shall
Vex one dear hair of her precious head.”
This is my covenant; that is all.

BYRON

HE was a wild, proud youth, with fiery eyes
Which but ensphered the image of his soul,
A thing of boundless passion, all unwise
As tameless steed impatient of control,
One of those strange incarnate mysteries
Whose lives like waves in headlong fury roll
Until, arrested by some sullen rock,
Their hearts are smote in pieces with the shock.

A burning fever lay within his heart,
Heating like fire the blood in every vein,
And ever and anon a flash would start
Like lightning from his heart into his brain,
And lie there scorching, like a fiery dart,
Till, in the terrible madness of his pain,
In thoughts like those by which himself was riven,
He'd hurl his enmity at God and Heaven.

Life and Love

But he was wretchéd! Poor child, he could not pray.
He could not own that he was weak and vile.
He might have revelled in the light of day,
Yet hugged his darkness closer all the while.
And so he let life's grandeur glide away,
And never on him fell one hope, one smile.
And then he died! As he had lived he died,
His white lips curled in bitterness and pride.

On a lone rock, amid a sea of souls,
His memory like a solemn specter stands,
And as in mighty waves it swells and rolls
There—in the tempest with uplifted hands
It warns them wildly off the reefs and shoals.
And so the tide streams on to other lands,
And evermore within its memory lies
That haggard phantom with its burning eyes.

LIFE AND LOVE

THERE is something to live for and something to
love

Wherever we linger, wherever we rove
There are thousands of sad ones to cheer and sustain
Till hopes that were hidden beam o'er them again.

Song of Spring

There is something to live for and something to love,
For the spirit of Man is like garden or grove,
It will yield a sweet fragrance, but still you must toil,
And cherish the blossoms, and culture the soil.

There is something to live for and something to love,
'Tis a truth which the misanthrope ne'er can disprove,
For tho' thorns and thistles may choke up the flower,
Some beauty will grace the most desolate bower.

Then think on it, brother, wherever thou art,
Let the life be for men and the love for the heart,
For know that the pathway which leads us above
Is something to live for and something to love.

SONG OF SPRING

MY heart goes forth to meet the Spring
With the step of a bounding roe,
For it seems like the touch of a seraph's wing
When the pleasant south winds blow.

O, I love the loneliness that lies
In the smiling heart of May,
The beauty throbbing in violet eyes,
The breath of the fragrant hay.

Letters from Home

There's a great calm joy in the song of birds,
And in the voice of the streams,
In the lowly peace of flocks and herds,
And our own soul's quiet dreams.

So my heart goes forth to meet the Spring
As a lover to his bride;
And over us both there broods the wing
Of the angel at her side.

LETTERS FROM HOME

LETTERS from my father's household,
Isled amid the far-off sea,
Swift-winged messengers of gladness,
Bearing rest and peace to me.
Father's calm and sacred counsel,
Mother's large and shining tears,
And my sister's brimming blessings
Flung across the mighty years.

Oh, the dear and loving letters!
Oh, my childhood's thronging dreams!
Oh, the ancient low-roofed cottage,
With its quaint old oaken beams!

Letters from Home

Oh, the haunts among the meadows,
And the moss-crowned garden seat,
Where the scented apple blossoms
Swept in waves about my feet.

And I sit and muse upon it
Till I seem to see it all;
See the rich grapes' purple clusters
Drooping from the leafy wall;
See the mellow pears a-ripening,
Breathe the breath of well-known flowers,
Watch the steady house clock marking
All the pulses of the hours.

Father's hair is growing whiter,
Mother's step is feebler now,
But the olden queen-like beauty
Lingers yet around her brow;
And the low, sweet tones that thrilled me,
And the lips I used to press,
Oh, the years can never win them
From their holy tenderness!

And the flashing eyes of laughter,
And the speech of merry scorn,
And the rippling auburn ringlets
Of our household's youngest born,

Annunciation

These have melted and have deepened
To the glory and the grace
Of a tranquil maiden moving
Thoughtfully amid the place.

Letters from my father's household,
Isled amid the far-off sea,
Swift-winged messengers of gladness,
Bearing rest and peace to me.
Let the foaming world roar onward,
Let the sinless children play,
And the young bride clasp her husband,
I am wealthiest to-day.

ANNUNCIATION

IS the grave deep, dear? Deeper still is Love.
They can not hide thee from thy Father's heart.
Thou liest below, and I stand here above,
Yet we are not apart.

The lyric patter of the little feet
That made a poem of the nursery floor,
Thy sweet eyes dancing toward me down the street,
Are with me evermore.

Annunciation

My breath is balmy with thy clinging kiss,
My hand is soft where thy soft fingers lay,
And yet there is a something which I miss
And mourn for night and day.

Mine eyes ache for thee; God's heaven is so high
We cannot see its singers, when thou dost
With thy lark's voice make palpitant all the sky,
I moan and pain the most.

Because the hunger of my spirit runs
Most swift in its swift asking after thee,
I yearn through all the systems and the suns,
But none doth answer me.

O, might I with thee fondle for an hour!
But now thou art too sacred; I must stand
Silent and reverent: thou hast grown to power,
And fitness and command.

And I walk here. Thou art above me now:
I may not longer teach thee anything.
Thou dost not heed my kisses on thy brow,
Nor any comforting.

How changed! How changed! A little while ago
And all the beautiful vast care was mine:

Inspection

Out from my bosom gushed the overflow
Of sacrificial wine;

And now thou art God's angel unto me.

Thus His ways mix, and he is ever good.
Reach me thy hand, Wife; we are held all three
In his Infinitude.

INSPECTION

LET them rave and let them lie:
What is that to you and I,
Soul of mine—we see the sky.

In these silences we hark
Something singing, and do mark
Something shining in the dark.

Though we bleed beneath the knives
Of the butcher, in our lives
Something fragrant yet survives,

Far beyond their blades of ill,
Brooding very calm and still,
Something which they can not kill.

Inspection

Though the worn flesh fail and waste,
Though the lees have bitter taste,
Though the past be interlaced,

Well I know that at the last,
When the sudden hurt is past,
Solemn peace, serene and vast,

In my heart will nestle so,
That I shall not feel nor know
Any harm or any woe.

Sorrow is a little thing,
Is it not, Soul, when we bring
Conscience unto suffering?

Though at first we swooned in death,
Yet when we had caught our breath,
And were squared fourfold in faith,

In our speech was no more moan,
For our feet were firmly grown,
And we did not stand alone.

Comrade-soul, we see and hear
Far beyond the mists unclear
Of the dark world's doubt and fear.

Inspection

Round our heads the great stars glow,
We can hear Life's mystic flow,
See its widening cycles grow.

And the Sages and the Seers
Of the immemorial years,
Since the earth first groaned in tears,

Speak unto us from the height,
Summered in the Infinite,
Where it evermore is light.

Wherefore kissed by hallowing lips,
Held in strong assuring grips
Of anointed fellowships,

What to us are gibe and frown?
What have we to cast us down?
Soul, arise, assume thy crown:

Turn thy features from the wall,
Make thy stature proud and tall:
See; the Lord is over all.

DENUNCIATION

OUT upon this hollow worship
Of the grandeur of our time;
Out upon its little greatness,
And the age's false sublime;
Out upon the brainless braggarts
Who are boasting evermore
Of the World's emancipation
From the thralling gloom of yore.

What is mind save when it giveth
Wider blessings, deeper good?
What is Love but that which liveth
For a human brotherhood?
Who among us is so lowly
That "himself" is but a name?
Whose the soul so pure and holy
That it never fawned for fame?

Does no leper robe in purple?
Sits no villain on a throne?
Lives no Dives in this present,
And is Lazarus unknown?
Hath the Truth a patient hearing?
Spurns no one a mighty thought?

Denunciation

Passion, reason, impulse, feeling,
Do we use them as we ought?

There are seething hells of torment,
When the worm that never dies
Revels in the writhing madness
Of the doomed one's agonies:
There are fields of crimson horror,
There be Golgothas of woe,
And a sea of sin and sorrow
Surges wheresoe'er we go.

Sycophants still sell their manhood,
Human things that cringe and crawl;
Purse-proud beggary still jostles
Threadbare merit 'gainst the wall:
But Life's Carnival moves onward
To the music and the mirth;
So the underlying madness
Seemeth but as little worth.

Out, then, on this hollow worship
Of the grandeur of our times;
Out upon our little greatness,
And the age's false sublime:
Whoso breathes the breath of boasting
He is traitor to his trust;
He alone who, toiling ever,
Fainteth nevermore, is just.

VOICE OF PROGRESS

BY Heaven! it is a shameful thing
That, in this age of deepening might,
There live so few whose souls dare cling
Forever to the right!
By Heaven! it is a crying sin
That, in this hour of ripening thought,
Where so much greatness lies within,
So little is outwrought.

The world is full of puling fools
Who prate of love in sickening rhymes,
Or bring stale tomes of trusty rules
To curb the chafing times ;
But where be they whose prophet-souls
Outlooking on life's Ocean waves,
Do warn us of the rocks and shoals
Which else become our graves ?

What care we for our father's creed ?
What reck we of the ancient themes ?
Is Truth less true in newer deeds
Than in decrepit dreams ?

Voice of Progress

All honor to our brave old Sires—
The unforgotten, worthy dead;
Yet shall our loftier desires
Be on their dulness fed?

Give us new Truth altho' it break
Upon us with the lightning's flash!
Give us new Truth! The Nations quake
Beneath the shifting crash.
Give us new Truth! Our souls despise
This blinding rush of deadly strife.
Past forms of Truth are present lies
Which canker all our life.

Therefore, new Truth! And let it burst
Like red-hot thunderbolts on those
In whom this fair world stands a curse
With such a hell of woes!
New Truth! Which ever more shall right
Earth's wronged and patient multitude;
And robe us all in rare delight
Of deep and earnest good.

COMFORT

ONE by one World's harms are smitten;
One by one its ripe wrongs fall;
One by one are carved and written
Man's sure triumph over all.
One by one the desert places
Grow with green and gush with light,
One by one God's finger traces
Moons and stars across the night.

One by one the cruel fetters
Of the tyrant flesh slide off;
One by one we learn the letters
Of the alphabet of love.
One by one the propped pretenses
Of usurping falsehoods die;
One by one new recompenses
Fill our voids up in the sky.

One by one our days of weaning
From things earthly go toward
Gorgeous harvest-days of gleanings
In the full tracts of the Lord.

Comfort

One by one the needs and gnawings
Of old hungers fail and pass;
One by one the Heaven's dear strawings
Bless our fields of barren grass.

Spite of weary months of sorrow,
Spite of long and laden years,
Bitter waitings for the morrow
Wherein lieth joy for tears;
Spite of tired hearts plowed with trouble,
Spite of blighting and of blame,
Spite of wastes of stones and stubble,
Spite of paths of woe and shame,

Spite of whatsoever evils
Make the sacred places foul,
Spite of whatsoever devils
Dog the footsteps of the soul,

Though the earth be still unshriven,
Though the years seem still undone,
Yet shall all, save man and Heaven,
Pass and perish, one by one.

LIFE'S DOWER

IN truth it is a lovely dower—
This nerve and brain, and blood and bone,
This leaping sense of kingly power
In hearts which be full grown.
In truth but they be glorious things—
These loves and hates and deep desires,
The thoughts that stride the lightning wings,
The spirit's gleaming fires.

'Tis a rare gift—this fresh warm life,
This upward yearning of the eye,
This soul that thrills unto the strife
That rolls like thunder by.
By Heaven! I can not understand
How breathe these ideas of our time,
These cowards of the lily hand,
When life is so sublime.

O, is it not a deep delight
To hurl the death at crime and **wrong**,
And, black and bloody with the **fight**,
Grow stronger and more strong?

Life's Dower

To spur right on the weltering heaps
Of cloven sins and gasping lies,
And mark the quivering limbs and lips,
The dull and glaring eyes?

O, brings it not a boundless bliss
To snatch some pale and trembling truth
From leprous lust whose hellish kiss
Had poisoned all of youth?
To wash her feet and bathe her eyes,
And smooth her wild dishevelled hair,
And rain our hottest sympathies
Like oil on her despair?

Ay brothers! 'tis a blessed thing—
This leaping life, this mounting blood,
These subtile fires that do cling
To God's infinitude:
And, brothers, shall we live like drones,
And let the rust gnaw out our night,
While all the green earth's royal sons
Form battle for the right?

THE INAUGURATION

March Fourth, 1857

VERY wanly to the eastward breaks the morning
cold and gray,

Very spectral seem the shadowed people moving down
the way,

Very feebly will the sunlight chance upon the hills
to-day.

Very loudly do the silver trumpets ring throughout the
street,

Very grandly fall the measured marches of the throng-
ing feet,

Very hoarse are all the voices of the beings whom I
meet.

And the mighty thunderous echoes of the cannon crash
and boom

Like the roar of coming people speaking to us through
the gloom,

And the startling noises shake the pictures hanging in
my room.

The Inauguration

Very proudly float the silken colors on the Capitol,
Very firmly does the old man tread across the Senate
Hall,
Very bland and very gracious is the smile he smiles on
all.

Lo! before our sacred Country's solemn altar see him
stand,
With the Book of flaming wisdom lying open in his
hand,
Swearing that in calm-souled justice he will judge and
rule the land.

And the eyes of staring thousands bend in wonder on
the sight,
And the hum of human voices cleaveth upward thro'
the light,
And the maddening waves of music drown the moan-
ings of the night.

Very courtly are the courtiers who have snatched the
gifts of chance,
Very brightly gleam the jewels of the movers in the
dance,
Very calmly from the fresco does the unknown hand
advance.

The Inauguration

And the naked fiery fingers write upon the ballroom
wall:

Lo! it is the song of many god-like spirits held in thrall,
Suffering deadly damning scourges for the human rights
of all.

In the newer fields of Freedom, where its last apostles
stood,

Glare the serpent eyes of Hatred, lie the pools of clotted
blood;

And a stifling cry of murder shudders at the gates of
God.

And the Mother with her children sits and starves upon
the plain,

As the ghastly gory gash that cast her husband with
the slain

Swings before her eyes forever, splitting thro' her heart
and brain.

And the smoke of burning hamlets blackens all the
blessed air,

While the savage shouts of reeking devils in their
slaughter-lair

Mingle with the shivering shrieks of trampled virgin-
hood's despair.

The Inauguration

And the clattering fetters fester on the brothers and the
sons

Who have battled for their Israel in the later Ajalons,
And the purple darkly trickles down the swooning
champions.

Foemen smear upon our foreheads bitter marks of fear
and shame;

And they trail their leprous fingers o'er our Mother-
Freedom's name,

Till the hot blood driving through us sets our very
breath aflame.

Where is judgment that it lingers through the years
thus overlong?

Where is Justice that she comes not fronting the
accursed wrong,

In whose choking grasp her righteous infant struggles
to be strong?

O, not evermore with triumph shall inhuman feet be
shod,

Nor our heart's dewdrip forever from the slaver's evil
rod,

And not always shall hell's scoffing banner flout the
skies of God.

A Soul's Despair

For through all the mournful midnights, keeping solemn
watch and ward,
Stands the silent sleepless Angel noting all the deeds
abhorred;
And the hour of wrath and ransom ripens surely, saith
the Lord!

A SOUL'S DESPAIR

I THINK God's ban is on me. I believe,
For some unknown wrong which doth make me foul,
His dread retributive thunders cling and cleave,
Closer than Nessus' shirt did, to my soul,
Which, like a hounded felon fugitive,
Goes staggering over beds of burning coal,
In lands where dragons howl and serpents hiss,
And no green grass or blessed water is.

All blessings which enrich the lives of men
Dissolve from me like phantoms. Kith or kin,
Wife, child, nor any one to love me, when
I cry out from the coils of pain wherein
My breath is strangled, have I; no, nor then,
When the worst devils tempt me, can I win
One pitying gleam from the stern heavens, which fling
My prayer back to me as a leprous thing.

A Soul's Despair

The benedictions which I give bring down
On beings whom I love a woe instead;
My smile is darker than a mother's frown;
Whatever flowers I look upon fall dead,
Blasted by my hot dreariness; if I crown
A forehead with my kiss, straightway is spread
A pall across it ; and whene'er I thirst
God smites me backward, reeling and accurst.

Before my lips are moistened, round my feet,
Black horror on conflagration of hell-fire
Scares off, with dread plenipotence of heat,
Whatever tender human hands aspire
To touch me softly, or what lips would greet,
With confronting whispers of calm hopes, the dire
Dumb aching of the life that only craves
A little room among the Earth's dear graves;

A little mound among the hillocks, where
In quiet peace the sacred daisies grow,
And all the noises that perplex the air,
The sobs and shoutings eddying to and fro,
World's harm, and hunger, and sublime despair,
Unto the placid sleepers there below,
Are as if such things were not, pillowed so
In that great rest which but the dead can know.

A Soul's Despair

O, happy dead! for whom the solemn feuds
Of the immortal soul with flesh and clay,
The infinite reaching toward far altitudes,
The downward dragging lapses, the mad sway
Of the wild passions, and the interludes
In which all holy props are stricken 'way,
And the world spins in darkness, have given place
To an unruffled calm of heart and face.

There wronged and wronging, conqueror and slave,
All anguish over, in sweet concord lie,—
The poet with the soaring wings that clave
The subtle ether of the intensest sky;
They whom the bitter poisoned arrows drave
To desperation and were slain thereby;
Young child and hoary grandsire: O, ye dead,
How by the living are ye envied.

Lo, also, through these heavy laden years,
My feet have sought you reverently; not
Because I shrank back from the strain that wears
The heart out slowly, nor because the lot
Assigned me was sown thickly with salt tears.
In all my past my spirit never sought
Surcease from sorrow by the trick of fear;
What I have borne I still am strong to bear.

A Soul's Despair

Nathless, because a voice I could not still

Pleaded within me like a little child

Against the sense of failure to fulfil

My meanings, and the promptings that defiled
The white ideals which I could not kill

Nor thrust out from my vision; balked and foiled
Alike in hopes that climbed and aims that crept,
I sought if haply I might intercept

My travail with sound sleeping. Therefore I

(And partly that the cause was beautiful),

When the thick smoke of battle quenched the sky

And the air shrieked with flame, and terrible
Lightnings of wrath blazed in the human eye,

And the breath heaved with vengeance, and the dull
Soul of the slave shot blossoming into fire,
And cowards were kings beneath the sovran ire

That crowned their foreheads royally, have been

Among the foremost in the bloody gaps

Where foot set fixedly to foot, and keen

Opposing steel played, while the thunder
Of the hot cannon made the hills careen

To their uttermost foundations, and the laps
Of the green valleys were piled deep with those
Whom nevermore the bugle-call might rouse;

Death and Desolation

Nor the torn banners, reared along the line,
Set their blood tingling grandly in the shock
Of charging hosts made drunken with the wine
Compelled from grapes of that immortal stock
God plants in all men's vineyards, for a sign
That there is vintage in us which doth mock
The mildew of all ages, and ferments
As the wine which the gods drank in the rents.

DEATH AND DESOLATION

DEAD—DEAD!
I shall never die I fear.
O heart so sore bestead,
O hunger never fed,
O life uncomforted.
It is drear, very drear!
I am cold.

The sunshine glorifying all the hills;
The children dancing 'mong the daffodils;
The thrush-like melodies of maidens' lips,
Brooding thanksgiving o'er dear fellowships;
The calm compassions and benignities

Death and Desolation

Of souls fast anchored in translucent seas;
The visible radiance of the Invisible,
Far glimpses of the Perfect Beautiful,
Haunting the Earth with Heaven—they warm not me;
The low-voiced winds breathe very soothingly,
Yet I am cold.

Years—years.

So long the dread companionship of pain,
So long the slow compression of the brain,
So long the bitter famine and the drouth,
So long the ache for kisses on the mouth,
So long the straining of hot tearless eyes
In backward looking upon Paradise,
So long tired feet dragged faltering and slow,
So long the solemn sanctity of woé.

Years—years.

Perhaps

There was a void in Heaven, which only she
Of all God's saintliest could fill perfectly;
Perhaps for too close clinging—too much sense
Of loving and of Love's Omnipotence,
I was stripped bare of gladness, like a tree
By the black thunder blasted. It may be
I was not worthy—that some inner flaw,
Which but the eye of the Omniscient saw,

Death and Desolation

Ran darkling through me, making me unclean.
I know not; but I know that what hath been,
The thrill, the rapture, the intense repose
Which but the passion-sceptered spirit knows,
The heart's great halo lighting up the days,
The breath all incense and the lips all praise,
Can be no more forever; that what is,
Drear suffocation in a drear abyss,
Lean hands outstretcht toward the dark profound,
Starved ears vain listening for a tender sound,
The set lips choking back the desolate cry
Wrung from the soul's forlornest agony,
Will last until the props of Being fall,
And the green grave's deep quiet covers all.
Perhaps the violets will blossom then
O'er me as sweetly as o'er other men.

Perhaps.

It is most sad,
This crumbling into chaos and decay.
My heart aches; and I think I shall go mad
Some day—some day.

HYMN OF PITTSBURG

MY father was a mighty Vulcan;
I am Smith of the land and sea;
The cunning spirit of Tubal-Cain
Came with my marrow to me.
I think great thoughts, strong-winged with steel,
I coin vast iron acts,
And orb the impalpable dreams of seers
Into comely, lyric facts.

I am Monarch of all the Forges,
I have solved the riddle of fire,
The Amen of Nature to cry of Man,
Answers at my desire.
I search with the subtle soul of flame
The heart of the rocky Earth,
And hot from my anvils the prophecies
Of the miracle-years leap forth.

I am swart with the soots of my furnace,
I drip with the sweats of toil;
My fingers throttle the savage wastes,
I tear the curse from the soil.
I fling the bridges across the gulfs
That hold us from the To-Be,
And build the roads for the bannered march
Of crowned humanity.

ENTREATY

Written on leaving New York for Kansas in 1856

SOMETIMES when the wind goes roaring
Thro' the city's streets and lanes,
And the homeless night is pouring
Blind tears on your window panes;
When you shudder for the sailor,
Cast on the moaning sea,
And the stranger in the forest—
Then, beloved, think of me.

Sometimes when the poet's verses
Thrill you with a sudden awe,
And dim, yearning depths of wonder
Throb on every breath you draw;
When his mighty anthem singing
Of our high humanity,
Parts your lips with fear and trembling—
Then, beloved, think of me.

Sometimes when you chance on stories
Of a calm-eyed little band,
Who, in frost and fire and famine,
Were still faithful to the land;

Expectancy

Who, through all the bloody tortures
Of a damning tyranny,
Bore the draggled robes of Freedom—
Then, beloved, think of me.

Think of me! I hear the voices
Of the struggle sweeping on,
And I feel my mounting spirit
Leap within me to be gone;
But beneath no crown of sorrow,
In no pride of victory,
Can my heart forget its yearnings—
So, beloved, think of me.

EXPECTANCY

I WAIT in the street for my darling.
Strange that I have not marked before
The wonderful lights which clasp and crown
The brows of the people passing down
The street I stand in, and that the roar
Of the crowded marts and thronging ways
Swell with a musical resonance—
Traffic blossoming into praise
With a divine significance,
As I wait in the street for my darling.

Expectancy

I wait in the street for my darling:

How changed the shops and houses are;
Only this morning they stood there stark
In the sooty vapors, grim and dark,
Their windows flinging a sudden glare;
While now it seems that the brick walls glow,
And now it seems that the windows shine
With an almost human overflow
Of happy gladness—which is the sign,
That I wait in the street for my darling.

I wait in the street for my darling:

There's a smell of purity in the air,
There's a flush of splendor along the skies,
There's a sweeter look in the people's eyes,
There's a sense of beauty everywhere;
There's a hymn in my heart, and on my feet
Winged sandals of blessed light;
And I know by a touch so soft and sweet
Of a tender hand, so fair and white,
I have met my love—my darling.

FAREWELL

GREAT tears are glistening in my eyes,
Washed hither by the large excess
Of your full-hearted lovingness,
And thy soul's meek serenities.

My spirit overflows its banks
With yearning that I can not stay;
And yet my lips can only say,
“ Dear friend, I give thee many thanks

“ For beauty of thy quiet speech,
The happy calmness of thy face,
Thy sweet smile lighting up the place
With pleasant warmth for all and each;

“ The voice that sounded in my ears
With such a strange serenity,
As though my mother spoke to me,
Across the silence of the years ”

THE SPIRIT OF REST

O H, come to me then when the Spirit of Rest
Breathes soft over my soul like the breath of a
dove,
And the pride and passion that burns in my breast,
Lie asleep 'neath the wings of the Angel of Love.

When my heart wanders back to the mystical past,
Where the sunlight of pleasure fell full on the hours,
And a gust of glad memories, swelling and vast,
Sweep over my soul as a whirlwind of flowers—

O! then as the brightest, where all things are bright,
Comes back the remembrance, dear sister, of thee;
And a calmness of bliss, like the calmness of light,
Leads my soul as the moon leads the passionate sea.

MARRIAGE HYMN

I N the still chambers of our souls
We softly walk away!
We let no tumult enter in,
No noise by night or day;
But listen very reverently
To what the voices say.

A Birthday Lily

A touch upon our clasped hands,
Light as a falling hair;
The sacred sweetness on us blows
Of newer breaths of air,
And in our great and holy calm
We know that they are there.

A BIRTHDAY LILY

I N May, the rosebud of the flowering year,
A stainless lily came;
Earth shone with light, and every starry sphere
Burned with diviner flame.

Art, brooding o'er her large beatitudes,
Felt a creative thrill
Run tingling through her splendid varying moods
And consentaneous will.

Song, praised amid her high interpretings,
Knew a seraphic fire
Ache in her bosom, and her startled wings
Shook music as a lyre.

And round the awful soul of virginhood
A whiter glory played,
And babes unto their mothers crawled and cooed,
More softly unafraid.

A GOLDEN TRESS

AH me! how slight a circumstance
May move our being's deepest springs.
Ah me ! how simple-seeming chance
Can clutch forgotten passion strings
And wake the old remembered tones,
Till memory maddens to the stir,
And all the past's oblivious bones
Leap living from the sepulcher!

I found to-day a golden tress
Of one who has been dead for years,
And such a sudden loneliness
Fell on my heart and on the spheres,
I well-nigh feared the Christ of faith
Had gathered all his sunshine in
And left us nothing but the wraith
Of our sad selfishness and sin.

The seat beneath the hazel boughs,
The woodlands where our feet did stray,
The quick warm thrill of whispered vows
That wore the precious time away;

A PICTURED FACE

The twilight depths of those dear eyes,
The reverent lips, the saintly brow,
The Eden hours of low replies,—
Beloved! how they haunt me now!

Almost my heart had bridged across
The solemn waters which did roll
Between my fearful sense of loss
And every other human soul;
But nothing now surmounts the waves
That wash my barren island shore,
Moaning like dead hopes from their graves—
Ah, nevermore! Ah, nevermore!

A PICTURED FACE

NOT quite a faultless face;
Yet something of a nameless grace,
A radiance from a higher place,

About the comfort-giving eyes,
And brown hair worn Madonna wise
Across the tender forehead, lies,

A Pictured Face

And round the lips that are so calm;
While loving words of healing balm
Float like the singing of a psalm,

Sung where the singing censers go
Before the altar, to and fro,
And all the people's heads are low,

Awing the stormful turbulence
Of my rough manhood, with the sense
Of meekness, and the affluence

Of that high-heartedness that springs
From Martyr-wisdom, and the things
Learned in vast silent communings;

With that pure sanctity that broods
Divine above our changeful moods,
Turning to uses and to goods

All loves, and hates, and smiles, and tears,
And downward from celestial spheres
Streams all along our earthly years.

With folded reverential hands,
I look up to her where she stands,
Interpreting the large commands

A PICTURED FACE

With which her days are held and led,
And which with glory and with dread
Have crowned the soul they followed.

I look up to her, and I know
That years may come and years may go,
And life may ebb and life may flow;

Yet still above the sweep and surge
Of pain and passion that doth urge
The hot time upon horrors' verge,

She will behold the Hand displayed,
She will stand ever undismayed;—
Wherefore my heart is not afraid.

INDIRECTION

FAIR are the flowers and the children, but their
subtle suggestion is fairer;

Rare is the roseburst of dawn, but the secret that clasps
it is rarer;

Sweet the exultance of song, but the strain that pre-
cedes it is sweeter;

And never was poem yet writ, but the meaning *out*-
mastered the meter.

Indirection

Never a daisy that grows, but a mystery guideth the
growing;

Never a river that flows, but a majesty scepters the
flowing;

Never a Shakespeare that soared, but a stronger than
he did enfold him,

Nor ever a prophet foretells, but a mightier seer hath
foretold him.

Back of the canvas that throbs the painter is hinted and
hidden;

Into the statue that breathes the soul of the sculptor is
bidden;

Under the joy that is felt lie the infinite issues of
feeling;

Crowning the glory revealed is the glory that crowns
the revealing.

Great are the symbols of being, but that which is sym-
boled is greater;

Vast the create^{born} and beheld, but vaster the inward
creator;

Back of the sound broods the silence, back of the gift
stands the giving;

Back of the hand that receives thrill the sensitive
nerves of receiving.

Advice Gratis

Space is as nothing to spirit, the deed is outdone by the
doing;

The heart of the wooer is warm, but warmer the heart
of the wooing;

And up from the pits where these shiver, and up from
the heights where those shine,

Twin voices and shadows swim starward, and the
essence of life is divine.

ADVICE GRATIS

DO you mean what you say? Did I hear aright?
Were you in earnest or in sport?

In love with a poet? Are you quite

At odds with sanity, to assert

That you, with beauty, and wit, and grace,

Instead of the station these might buy,

Have smilingly set your feet and face

Toward paths where such low choosings lie?

A poet—a maker of verses—one

Who daily coins, for his daily bread,

The blood of his heart in rhymes that run

His brain to fever with fear and dread,

Advice Gratis

Lest that he mar, in speaking it,
The tone of the Voice that comes to him
Somewhere out from the infinite,
Somewhere out from the vast and dim.

You need not answer; I know your thought.
You tell me that, since there must be those
Whose lips, like the throats of birds, are wrought
Chiefly for singing, it follows close
That God, attuning them to such pitch,
Accepts their songs for service—thus
Making our sneers at a soul on which
He has laid his pressure perilous.

And this in a sense is true. But this
Is also mystical: we should take
The world in the gross; we must not miss
Of ease and elegance for the sake
Of dreams and dreamers; and I opine
It would strike fresh heat in your poet's verse
If you dropped some aloes into his wine—
They write supremely under a curse.

Will that invisible truth of things
Which shines on your minstrel compensate
The lack of the visible comfortings,
The tangible gifts and goods that wait

Advice Gratis

On stocks and dividends? Which are best—
These vagabond inspirations, or
Hard cash in hand, and the sense in the breast
That you have gained what you bargained for?

It is good, no doubt, that a man should be
Cast in such weird and singular mold
As dowers his vision with power to see
God's splendors flaming, where you behold
Only the flaring of lighted gas;
But with a husband we demand
(Letting the gift of prophecy pass)
The coin that is current in the land.

Therefore I should advise you, dear,
To give your lyrical vagrant such
Sufficient hint of a prudent fear,
As—without wounding him overmuch—
May serve to smite his insolent hopes
Down to levels of lesser range;
Sending him back to his crowding tropes
Wiser and sadder for that change.

AN OLD MAN'S IDYL

BY the waters of Life we sat together,
Hand in hand in the golden days
Of the beautiful early summer weather,
When skies were purple and breath was praise;
When the heart kept tune to the carol of birds,
And the birds kept tune to the songs which ran
Through shimmer of flowers on grassy swards,
And trees with voices Æolian.

By the rivers of Life we walked together,
I and my darling unafraid;
And lighter than any linnet's feather
The burdens of being on us weighed.
And love's sweet miracles o'er us threw
Mantles of joy outlasting time,
And up from the rosy morrows grew
A sound that seemed like a marriage chime.

In the gardens of Life we strayed together;
And the luscious apples were ripe and red,
And the languid lilac and honeyed heather
Swooned with the fragrance which they shed.
And under the trees the angels walked,
And up in the air a sense of wings
Awed us tenderly while we talked
Softly in sacred communings.

An Old Man's Idyl

In the meadows of Life we strayed together,
Watching the waving harvests grow;
And under the benison of the Father
Our hearts, like the lambs, skipped to and fro.
And the cowslips, hearing our low replies,
Broidered fairer the emerald banks,
And glad tears shone in the daisies' eyes,
And the timid violets glistened thanks.

Who was with us, and what was round us,
Neither myself nor my darling guessed;
Only we knew that something crowned us
Out from the heavens with crowns of rest;
Only we knew that something bright
Lingered lovingly where we stood.
Clothed with the incandescent light
Of something higher than humanhood.

O the riches Love doth inherit!
Ah, the alchemy which doth change
Dross of body and dregs of spirit
Into sanctities rare and strange!
My flesh is feeble and dry and old,
My darling's beautiful hair is gray;
But our elixir and precious gold
Laugh at the footsteps of decay.

The Prize Fight

Harms of the world have come unto us,
Cups of sorrow we yet shall drain;
But we have a secret which doth show us
Wonderful rainbows in the rain.
And we hear the tread of the years move by,
And the sun is setting behind the hills;
But my darling does not fear to die,
And I am happy in what God wills.

So we sit by our household fires together,
Dreaming the dreams of long ago:
Then it was balmy summer weather,
And now the valleys are laid in snow.
Icicles hang from the slippery eaves;
The wind blows cold,—'tis growing late;
Well, well! we have garnered all our sheaves,
I and my darling, and we wait.

THE PRIZE FIGHT

EIGHTEEN hundred and sixty years
Of Christward leverage under the spheres;
And what is the thing that now appears?

Troops of golden prophecies come
Up from the bountiful martyrdom
That struck the jeering world so dumb.

The Prize Fight

Wherefore, far on the outer verge
Of tangled cycles of sorrow and scourge,
Where, mid the passionate ages' surge,

I catch the shining of those white days
For which the universe moans and prays—
Soft hours wherein is no dispraise.

But what of beautiful and of sweet
Doth the earth, made green by touch of His feet,
Yield to the Holy Paraclete?

The lips of a glorious brotherhood
Fling to the jasper gates of God
A cry that sounds as a voice of blood.

Under the clear compassionate skies
Two men glare in each other's eyes;
And yet they are not enemies.

Amethyst pure are their affluent veins,
Royal their strength of loins and reins,
Dark their ghastly gashes and stains.

Poet, whose super-sensual ken
Cleaves to the souls of things and men,
Where was your scorn of scorning then?

The Prize Fight

Priest, in the shadow of the Cross,
Naming the things of the earth for dross,
Why did you stand at such utter loss?

Mother-queen of the isles and seas,
Throned in purple regalities,—
You, with your children round your knees,

Singing of love and of innocence—
Where was your law's just vehemence,
And where your own large woman-sense?

The poet withheld his awful breath;
The craven priest was still as death;
He did not whisper of Nazareth.

The queen sate silent: the strong law slept:
And a roar of horrible laughter leapt
From the throat of hell to the heavens that wept.

Eighteen hundred and sixty years
Of Christward leverage under the spheres;
And this is the thing that now appears.

GOING HOME

I THINK that in the time of year
When all the earth is white with snow,
And men run shivering to and fro
About the frozen hemisphere;

When all the lakes are fast asleep,
And all the forest trees are bare,
And cold amid the icy air
The pale skies can no longer weep,

I will gird up my loins to make
A journey o'er the sluggish seas,
That, kneeling at my mother's knees,
I may a little while forsake

This deadly time of uncontrol,
The weary toiling of the brain,
The voice that like a moan of pain
And darkness lingers in my soul.

There are fine yearnings in the breath,
Deep pulses in the silent heart,
Which, cast aside or rent apart,
Like poor gashed veins will bleed to death.

A Man's Name

And I, who am sore parched with drought,
Have strangely hungered overmuch
For Father's slightest finger-touch,
And kisses from my mother's mouth.

I see two sister-faces shine
Around my footsteps more and more;
And on the river and the shore
I hold a brother's hand in mine.

So, when the early sunsets come,
And, blazing on the household hearth,
The ruddy yule-logs sparkle forth,
I will go forward to my home.

A MAN'S NAME

In memoriam, David Simmons, Railroad Engineer. Died February 6th, 1871, near New Hamburg, N. Y.

THROUGH the packed horror of the night
It rose up like a star,
And sailed into the infinite,
Where the immortals are.

“Down brakes!” One splendid hard-held breath,
An lo! an unknown name
Strode into sovereignty from death,
Trailing a path of flame.

A Man's Name

“Jump!”—“I remain.”—No needless word,
No vagueness in his breast;
Along his blood the swift test stirred—
He answered to the test,

Gripped his black peril like a vice,
And, as he grappled, saw
That life is one with sacrifice.
And duty one with law.

Home:—but his feet grew granite fast;
Wife:—yet he did not reel;
Babes:—ah, they tugged! but to the last
He stood there true as steel.

Above his own heart's lovingness,
Above another's crime,
Above the immitigable stress,
Above himself, and time,

Smote loving comfort on the cheek,
Gave quibbling Fear the lie,
Taught ambling fluence how to speak,
And brave men how to die.

Who said the time of kings was gone?
Who said our Alps were low,
And not by God's airs blown upon?
Behold it is not so.

The Children

Out from the palace and the hut
Dwarf-fronted, lame of will,
Limp our marred Joves and giants—but
Sceptered for mastery still,

And clothed with puissance to quell
Whatever mobs of shame
Are leagued within us, with such spell
As David Simmons' name.

THE CHILDREN

DO you love me, little children?
O sweet blossoms that are curled
(Life's tender morning glories)

'Round the casement of the world!
Do your hearts climb up toward me,
As my own heart bends to you,
In the beauty of your dawning
And the brightness of your dew?

When the fragrance of your faces
And the rhythm of your feet,
And the incense of your voices
Transform the sullen street,

The Children

Do you see my soul move softly
Forever where you move,
With an eye of benediction
And a guarding hand of love?

O my darlings! I am with you
In your trouble, in your play,
In your sobbing and your singing,
In your dark and in your day,
In the chambers where you nestle,
In the hovels where you lie,
In the sunlight where you blossom,
And the blackness where you die.

Not a blessing broods above you,
But it lifts me from the ground;
Not a thistle-barb doth sting you,
But I suffer with the wound;
And a chord within me trembles
To your lightest touch or tone,
And I famish when you hunger,
And I shiver when you moan.

Can you tell me, little children,
Why it is I love you so?
Why I'm weary with the burthens
Of my sad and dreary woe?

Esoteric

Do the myrtle and the aloes
Spring blithely from one tree?
Yet I love you, O my darlings!
Have you any flowers for me?

I have trodden all the spaces
Of my solemn years alone,
And have never felt the cooing
Of a babe's breath near my own.
But with more than father passion,
And with more than mother pain,
I have loved you, little children:
Do you love me back again?

ESOTERIC

ART is fine, but love is finer;
Can you paint a soul?
What if beauty is diviner,
Fragrant, or the whole?

Song is sweet, but love is sweeter;
Was there ever hymn
That for compass and for meter,
Bowed the Seraphim?

A Woman's Breath

Thought is great, but love is greater;
Who can search out truth?
Love alone is revelator,
Love is love, in sooth.

A WOMAN'S BREATH

"I certainly should not advise any poor man to marry me."—
[From a letter.]

WHAT fatal mastery of indirection
Lurks in a woman's breath;
A courteous phrase, a gracious genuflexion,
And hope is stabbed to death.

And love moans reeling down the vast abysses
Of horrible despair,
Maddened by memory of immortal kisses,
And sounds of tones that were.

The torture of the ghostly touch of fingers
That hold you passion-tight,
And torment of a lilac dawn that lingers
About your lurid night;

A Voice from the Condemned

While, over all these desolations,
She walks in serene guise,
With not a shiver in her heart's pulsations,
Nor in her level eyes.

A VOICE FROM THE CONDEMNED

I THINK, by the streak of gray
Just over my window-bars,
And the waning of the stars,
It must be the break of day.

I hear the murmur of words
Close by on the courtyard stones;
I guess 'tis the workmen's tones,
As they fix the scaffold boards.

In three hours I shall be dead—
Last week I hilted my knife
To the heart of a rich man's life,
And spent his money for bread.

A dozen summers ago
(I was then a child, cast forth
Without a friend on the earth)
He struck me a bitter blow,

A Voice from the Condemned

A blow and a coward's curse,
When I asked for a crust of food;
And so I remembered his mood,
And settled the wrong with worse.

My vengeance was that which waits;
So I let him fatten and fume
Till I thought him ripe for doom,
When I kicked him out to the fates.

A murderer, ay!—who cares?
I let out the blood of his heart—
So, having acted my part,
I leave you not unawares.

He sowed the seed in my soul,
And he reaped the ripened grain;
No doubt, were he here again,
He would speedily give the dole.

I shall meet him to-day at seven—
And yet, is it really well
To strike me at once to hell,
When both might have gone to heaven?

NOBILITY

CAN'T man be noble unless he be great,
With a patrimonial hall;
And heaps of gold and vast estate,
And vassals at his call?

Can't man be noble unless there be
A title to his name,
Unless he live in luxury
Or loll in the seats of fame?

Can't man be noble unless his voice
Be heard in the senate band;
Or his eye flash bright and his words breathe light,
Through all his native land?

Ah yes! at the forge and the weaver's loom,
As well as in hall of state,
At the desk and in the cottage room,
There are noble ones and great.

They are springing up on every side,
In hamlet and in town;
Where the stream pours and ocean roars,
They are wreathing a laurel crown.

Reconciliation

They are weaving the mighty robe of truth,
And bold are the throws they make,
As they are teaching age and guilt
Oppressive bonds to break.

Yes, these are the noble and the great,
Who will shine at a distant day,
Where titled ones of hall and state,
Shall have been but far away.

RECONCILIATION

N O man can climb so close to God
But needeth to beseech Him,
Nor lapse so far to devilhood
That mercy can not reach him.
We stand, with all, on level ground.
In equal human fashion,
Encompassed by the blue profound
Of infinite compassion!

Shake hands then on the rusted swords,
O blood-bedraggled nation!
Smite down the past with sweet accord
Of reconciliation;

Fragments

Walk brotherly and lovingly
The upward paths of duty,
And let the kings and tyrants see
A people's kingly beauty!

FRAGMENTS

C LASPED by the glory of her face
Death looked so beautiful and meek,
I knew at once he came to seek,
For God's sweet offices of grace,
The soul that lately passed to Him
Thro' this white gate of blessed flowers,
Which now I wet with tearful showers
While waiting for the Seraphim.



I love the starlight so with a love
Strange as the heart of woman! In my soul
There are no feelings lying so deep,
Save the yearnings toward my mother: I do mind
How, when the nights were gloomy, I have watched
With earnest patience waiting for the light
Shining behind the dark of driving clouds;

Fragments

And I remember how the unconscious tears
Would tremble on my eyelids, when a star
Looked on me thro' the tempest. T'was a joy
Just like my joy in childhood, when I felt
The sweet eyes of my mother touch my soul,
And her lips kiss my forehead; O, the stars!



I know that when the shadows deepen, and the world
Goes like an infant to its proper rest,
The human heart grows holier, and the soul
Speaks with a purer language, and a voice
Which is not of the noonday, makes us thrill
With its strange subtleties;
Some fibers in all hearts hold fast to heaven;—
I could not live without the stars.



Here she stood
With her white finger pointing to the skies,
Thick sown with majesties as earth is sown
With troubled human love ! “Walter,” she said,
“These are my witnesses”; then burst in tears
Like a full cloud, pouring out its heart in rain.

Sentinel Thoughts

She kissed me, my beautiful darling,
I drank the delight of her lips;
The universe melted to ether,
Mortality stood in eclipse.
A spirit of light stood before me,
I heard a far rustle of wings;
The kings of the earth were as beggars,
And the beggars of earth were as kings.

SENTINEL THOUGHTS

(Unfinished)

I PACE my beat in silentness
Of dream, and nurse and ponder,
Re-live the days of battle stress,
Re-tread the fields of thunder;
Re-walk the wastes where carnage gave
His mad hounds blood for water,
Review the cities of the grave,
The bivouacs of slaughter.

I see the desolated homes,
The ruined altar places,
The symbols of dread martyrdoms
Written in women's faces.

Magdalena

I hear the sonless father's sighs,
The bereaved mother praying,
The little children's sobbing cries,
Orphaned amid their playing.

I mark the myriad souls that swoon
Beneath war's cruel splinters;
The widowed lives that dwell alone,
In everlasting winters.

MAGDALENA

WHEN a poor forsaken sister,
Whom we name a fearful name,
From the leprous life that kissed her,
Shudders back, all bound with shame;
When her weary soul is yearning
For the light of God's own skies,
And, far off, a dim discerning
Of a purer morrow lies;

Do not thou who, less believing,
Loving less, hast conquered more,—
Do not thrust her backward grieving
To the life she lived before;

Magdalena

Do not pass her by and whisper
Bitter words of scorn and pain;
Make her crisp, hot heart grow crisper,
And the red hell burn again.

Who art thou that passest sentence
On a bleeding human soul?
Could'st thou drain full-dregged repentance
If no love were in the bowl?
Is not she, poor, stricken weeper,
Loved of Heaven, alike with thee?
Fool! thy pride hath thrust thee deeper
Than thy sister—Pharisee!

Nighest to the great, calm splendor
Of our first poor innocence,
Is the halo, sadly tender,
Of a warm heart's penitence.
Wherefore, brothers, since transgression
Shrouds each spirit like a pall,
Is not meek and full confession
Best and noblest for us all?

Go! and when, proud soul, thou learnest
Thou, and I, and all are one,
Then shall beauty, deep and earnest,
Greet thee like a newer love.

Mother Remembrance

And the love that lights thy features,
In thy wider eyes should be
Unto all God's living creatures
Even as it is to thee.

MOTHER REMEMBRANCE

AS soon as the clock in the hall strikes eight,
'Twill be thirteen lonely years
Since my heart's lost darling, fair-haired Kate,
Looked into these eyes of tears.
I did not dream when she went away
To pass a month in the town,
She would make such a long and bitter stay,
And so sink my spirit down.

I only thought of the city sights,
Of the things that she would learn,
Of the morrow's ever-new delights,
And her womanly return.
I only thought how my life would gush
When I kissed her lips again;
I did not dream of the weary crush
Of these thirteen years of pain.

Mother Remembrance

God pity thee, my beautiful child,
For the love which thou has spilt;
And the pure white hopes thou hast defiled
With thy fearful spots of guilt!
God pity thee, in thy gilded halls
Of sorrow and shame and sin,
Where the shadows of death forever falls
On the lips of all within.

There is no one now when your temples leap,
And the fire shoots through your brain,
To fold you close in the sweet warm sleep
You will never know again!
There is no one now when the nights are long,
And the tempests walk the skies,
To sing you the happy fireside song
We have sung with thankful eyes.

Do you never think of our dreary home?
Of your father's thin, gray hair?
Of the voice we miss in the little room,
And my broken-hearted prayer?
Do you never wring your delicate hands,
Nor clench your shuddering teeth,
When your soul's shrill whispers stir the brands
Of the burning hell beneath?

Nameless

Have you never wished you could come at night,
When all in the house was still,
And watch us sit by the candle light,
From the little window-sill?
To lift the latch of the half-closed door?
And, with a passionate cry,
Kneel down at our tottering feet once more,
And fall on our necks, and die?

Come back, my beautiful desolate one,
Come back to thy native place,
Where the healing air may breathe upon
The hurt of thy haggard face!
There's a vacant bed and an empty chair,
In the silent room above;
Come back, dear child, to thy father's care
And my all-forgiving love.

NAMELESS

JUDGE, I plead guilty; he speaks the truth:
I am what he says, and what you see.
So old in a damned, unhallowed youth,
That your wrinkled years seem young to me.

Nameless

Don't preach—don't lecture. I know it all:

The easy canting, the fluent words,
The solemn drivel of text from Paul,
And a mangled phrase or two of the Lord's.

Moreover you err if you suppose

That even a harlot, soaked in sin,
Slides down the darkness without some throes
Of the marred meek purities within.
O sir! you wrong even our disgrace,
To think that we never wail and cry
Out from the foulness with lifted face
To an awful Something up in the sky.

Do you think I never dream of home,

Of a weary man with whitening hair?
Of a missing voice in a vacant room,
And the sobs a-choke in a woman's prayer?
That nothing has ever prompted flight,
Swift as my hungry feet could fly,
Fatherward, motherward—that I might
Fall on their necks, break heart, and die?

My God, my God! when the masked brows must

Be clothed with a false forged radiance, while
The bloom of the soul is burnt to dust,
And under a fabricated smile

Nameless

Dead ghosts of murdered innocence glare
Devils from their accusing eyes,
And a babe's chirrup thrown on the air
Scares like thunder out of the skies;

When the sweet sanctities set to guard
The inner whiteness from outer stain,
Tricked of their holy watch and ward,
Moan and madden in heart and brain;
And a howling fury hunts and hounds
Wherever a clean thought hides away;
And a dreadful voice of dooming sounds
Through the haunted chambers night and day;

And a Something mocks you when you laugh,
And a Something jeers you when you weep;
And hell-fire lurks in the wine you quaff,
And a fiend grins at you in your sleep;
And a coiling horror sucks you down
Through a black and bottomless abyss—
Judge, do you think your legal frown
Can augur punishment worse than this?

Bah, what a horrible fool am I
To talk like this to a man like you!
Someday the toughest of us must die,
And we shall be sifted, through and through,

A Voice from a City Cellar

Sifted and sorted. Judge, have you thought
That possibly to the sorted, then,
Something that now is may be naught,
When the cowards' shrieks steam up from men?

A VOICE FROM A CITY CELLAR

I T is true I am very poor,
And yet I love my child
With a love as deep and wild,
As full of the brimming o'er
Of its passionate bursting waves,
As if silver handles were on my door
And my house were filled with slaves.

Do you think that because I live
In a cellar underground,
From poverty's yelping hound
A sort of fugitive,
That the angels never come
And look with love on the love I give?
Do you think my heart is dumb?

I know I can hardly clothe
My dear babe's body and feet,
While scarcely ever we eat
A meal which you would not loathe;

A Voice from a City Cellar

But I tell you, milk-faced miss,
That e'er God severs our double growth,
He must send more pain than this.

I wash his hands and his face
And patch up his trowser rents,
Then send him to gather pence
From men in the market place.
He comes home covered with dirt,
But think you I think him less in grace
Because he hasn't a shirt?

Our bed in the corner there
(That's it, the bundle of straw
Which the rats have begun to gnaw—
'Tis rather a poor affair)
Is a resting place for two
Who own just as much of the boundless air
As our Father giveth to you.

What, going? well, go; and learn
That the living infinite spark
Shot out in the mighty dark
May light up a cellar and burn
In a beggar's heart and eyes,
With as fixed a flame as thou canst discern
In thy shining, affluent skies.

SONG OF THE OUTCAST

“ **H**OW coldly the shuddering night wind moans
In gusts thro' the glimmering street,
And how drearily echo the dismal stones
To the tread of my listless feet.
And the hollow voice of the sobbing rain
And the talk of the sounding sea
Seem only as terrible tongues of pain
That hiss like the fiends at me.

“ I can bear the horrible fiery rain
Men pelt from their scornful eyes,
And stand untouched by the mournful mien
That comes from the good and wise;
But, oh! when the passing rain and wind
And the very ocean's swell
Do burn and blast in my inmost mind,
I could wish myself in hell.

“ I am very glad that mother died
Ere the desolation came,
When, drunken with flaming dreams of pride,
I clasped to my soul the shame.

Song of the Outcast

Thank God! Thank God! she is dead and gone,
For 't would splinter her heart in twain
To know that the leper they spit upon
Drew life from her blood and brain.

“ I wonder if father loves me yet,
And whether the blessed child,
The life that rose on the life that set,
Still lives, and is undefiled.
O, mother! I think I see her now
With the new babe on her breast,
The glory clasping her pure white brow
And the angel bringing rest.

“ How, many a time, when my drenched soul swims
In bitter and blinding tears,
And there comes a sound of tender hymns
Across these blasphemous years,
Do I rush forth into the great dark night
And cover my burning face,
To shut from my vision the ghastly blight
I have breathed in my native place.

“ O dark, dark past, must it always glare
With dreadful and damning eye?
Do none of the beautiful angels care
For such fallen ones as I?

Song of the Seamstress

I could clasp whole worlds of deadliest pain,
Kiss every stroke of the rod
That should scourge my poor soul back again
To its early love for God.

“ But it may not be; for on every side
I am spurned and unforgiven,
And trampled beneath the heels of pride
By the very sons of heaven.
So I needs must cling to my fearful life
With the curse upon my head,
In the Christless doom of this dreadful strife
For a sheltering roof and bread.”

SONG OF THE SEAMSTRESS

I T is twelve o'clock by the city's chime,
And my task is not yet done;
Through two more weary hours of time
Must my heavy eyes ache on.
I may not suffer my tears to come,
And I dare not stop to feel;
For each idle moment steals a crumb
From my sad to-morrow's meal.

Song of the Seamstress

It is very cold in this cheerless room,
And my limbs are strangely chill;
My pulses beat with a sense of doom,
And my very heart seems still;
But I shall not care for this so much,
If my fingers hold their power,
And the hand of sleep forbears to touch
My eyes for another hour.

I wish I could earn a little more,
And live in another street,
Where I need not tremble to pass the door,
And shudder at all I meet.
'Tis a fearful thing that a friendless girl
Forever alone should dwell
In the midst of scenes enough to hurl
A universe to hell.

God knows that I do not wish to sink
In the pit that yawns around;
But I cannot stand on its very brink,
As I could on purer ground;
I do not think that my strength is gone,
Nor fear for my shortening breath;
But the terrible winter is coming on,
And I must not starve to death.

Hashish

I wish I had died with sister Rose,
Ere hunger and I were mates;
Ere I felt the grip of the thought that grows
The hotter the more it waits.
I am sure that He whom they curse to me,
The Father of all our race,
Did not mean the world He made to be
Such a dark and dreary place.

I would not mind if they'd only give
A little less meager pay,
And spare me a moment's time to grieve,
With a little while to pray.
But until these far-off blessings come,
I may neither weep nor kneel;
For, alas! 'twould cost me a precious crumb
Of my sad to-morrow's meal.

HASHISH

IF ever you should desire to gain
A glimpse of the primal regions where
The vital tissues o' the heart lie bare,
The intricate coils of life are plain;
If you have strength enough to dare
The apocalypse which turns the brain

Hashish

With too much peering of mortal eyes
Into the immortalities,
And—stabbed with splendors that hurt like pain—
Wake from the gorgeous dream at last
Dogged by phantoms which cleave and cling
Closer than any living thing,
Haunting your future with their past,
Liming you in a charmed ring,
Cutting you with a wizard wing
Out from the darkness, till you die—
Eat of the hashish, as did I.

It was not the drug of the Orient,
With which the poet simulates
A warmth in his veins when the fires are spent,
A flight in the blue when the bitter weights
Of the world have broken his wings; it was
More beautiful, awful, terrible!
Clothed on with fantasies which surpass
Whatever is known of heaven or hell,
When, under the touch of the other spell,
Back the mystical curtains roll,
And up, unscreened, to the seeing soul,
Past and present and future rise,
Bearing the secrets in their eyes.

She could not help that she distilled
A blessed aroma all around;

Hashish

She could not help it that she filled
My arid silence with cooing sound;
She could not help that her sweet face
Was as a reverential hymn;
She could not help that round her place
Lingered the Lord God's cherubim.

Was it so strange that, brooding thus,
Over her saintly humanhood,
Deliriums multitudinous
Wrought in my pulses and my blood?
That I dreamed dear dreams of a wedded wife?
That some one walked in my sleep by my side?
That I stood in a tremulous hush of life,
Content to stand so until I died?
Oh, the clear beneficent days!
Oh, the calm and reverent nights!
Oh, the mornings of perfect praise!
Oh, the evenings of pure delights!
Oh, the whispers in which we talked!
Oh, arch replies of merry lips!
Oh, the trances wherein we walked!
And the beautiful fellowships!
Spirit with spirit so ingrooved,
Sympathies so divinely blent,
My blessing watched the flowers she loved,
And made my poverty opulent,

“ Mollie ”

The well-pleased angels smiling on
That most ineffable unison!

.

No trance is life-long; all dreams flee—
I am awake now; something cut
The path of the currents lifting me,
And close the inscrutable blankness shut
Down on my mount Delectable;
Down on my fields Elysian;
Down on my Palace Beautiful!
Over the universe something ran
Which trod the gold and the amethyst
Out from the mornings and the eves;
Something withered the grass and leaves;
Out from the vastness something hissed;
And something within me moans and grieves,
Like a lost soul's wail for something missed.

“ MOLLIE ”

IS the grave deep, dear? Deeper still is love.
They cannot hide thee from thy father's heart,
Thou liest below, and I stand here above;
Yet are we not apart.

“ Mollie ”

The lyric patter of thy blessed feet
That made a poem of the nursery floor—
The sweet eyes dancing toward me down the street—
Are with me evermore.

My breath is balmy with thy clinging kiss,
My hand is soft wherein thy soft palm lay;
And yet there is something which I miss
And mourn for night and day.

My eyes ache for thee. God's heaven is so high
We can not see its singers: when thou dost
With thy lark's voice make palpitant all the sky,
I moan and pain the most.

Because the hunger of my vision runs
Most swift in its swift seeking after thee,
I yearn through all the systems and the suns,
But none doth answer me.

And then I grow a-weary, and do tire;
And not my darlings in their earthly place
Can wean the passion with which I desire
Thy lips upon my face.

If I could fondle with thee for an hour!—
But now thou art too sacred. I must stand
Silent and reverent: thou hast grown to power,
And fitness, and command;

“ He Giveth His Beloved Rest ”

And I walk here. Thou art above me now.
I may not longer teach thee anything.
Thou dost not need my blessing on thy brow,
Nor any comforting.

How changed—how changed! A little while ago,
And all the beautiful vast care was mine.
Out from my bosom gushed the overflow
Of sacrificial wine.

And now thou art God's angel unto me.
Thus His ways mix, and He is ever good.
Reach me thy hand, wife; we are held all three
In His infinitude.

“ HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED REST ”

O 'ER mile-long tracks of ice and snow
And endless sodden wastes of woe,
It came a little while ago.

My life stood so much at the worst,
I seemed so bitterly accurst,
I hardly knew it at the first.

“He Giveth His Beloved Rest”

It grew not on me suddenly,
With such swift shining as might lie
In light down-streaming from the sky—

A great and mighty rushing thrill
Of glory flooding at my will,
And into good transforming ill.

But with such saintly-meek degrees
Of motherly-sweet influences
As softly pressed me to my knees,

And warmly touched my praying lips
With words of strange new fellowships
Strong-winged like homeward-freighted ships;

And with white hands of tenderness
So led me forth from my distress
To places that were sorrowless,

That at the last I could but say,
“O Spirit, lead me night and day,
And I will follow thee away.

“Thou art more gentle to me now
In this great grief whereto I bow,
Than mother-kisses on my brow;

“ He Giveth His Beloved Rest ”

“ Fuller of solace and of rest
Than place upon my mother's breast
When I was wearily opprest.

“ Her sacred eyes were tender-bright
With large excess of love and light,
In the sweet time of her good-night;

“ But thy calm orbs with greater store
Of holy warmth are suffused o'er,
And they do thrill me more and more.

“ Her voice was very soothing-low;
But thine doth overfill me so
With such a wonder-clasping glow,

“ And so much beautiful increase
Of luminous seraphic peace
Is in thy patient utterances,

“ That I can only kneel and pray,
O Spirit, guide me night and day,
And I will follow thee away.”

I REMEMBER

I REMEMBER—I remember
In the dying of the year,
When I used to pine and sicken
For a little human cheer;
How unto my crazy letters
Came her answers warm and true,
Quickening all the blood within me—
I remember—yes I do.

I remember—I remember
When I reached my home once more,
How I hurried thro' the city
'Till I stood before her door;
How I leaped along the stairway,
How the staring servant flew
With the message of the stranger—
I remember—yes I do.

I remember—I remember
How my foolish pulses shook,
When she met me in the parlor
With the old beloved look;
How my full eyes wet their lashes,
How it thrilled me through and through
When her dark orbs leaned toward me—
I remember—yes I do.

Communion

I remember—I remember
All our earnest poet-talks,
All our mystic music-dreamings,
Held in blessed city-walks;
How we sat among the pictures
Which the prophet-painters drew;
And the speech of marble statues
I remember—yes I do.

I remember—I remember
How her sacred counsellings
Went across my moody nature
Like a sweep of angel wings;
All the fellowship she gave me,
All the peace that from it grew,
And the weary, weary parting—
I remember—yes I do.

COMMUNION

THE somber daylight dies, mother,
It is the quiet even—
The hour when thy dear eyes, mother,
Are brooding toward heaven.

Communion

Thy life is lifted there, mother,
For all thy scattered sheep:
O mind! O soul! O care, mother,
A mother's prayer is deep.

Across the aching sea, mother,
Is drawn a mystic chain
Which lengthens unto me, mother,
And back to thee again,
And skyward then doth grow, mother,
Beyond the utmost star;
Ah! only angels know, mother,
How many links there are.

It tightens round me now, mother,
I feel my spirit come
Swifter than speeding prow, mother,
To thee, and peace, and home.
I walk the hallowed ground, mother,
I see thee turn, and start—
And now, with one vast bound, mother,
I fall upon thy heart.

We sing the olden hymn, mother,
Unto the olden strain:—
What makes our eyes grow dim, mother,
With beatific rain?

Impatience

How far the world removes, mother,
What soft spells o'er me creep:—
O, in thy love of loves, mother,
I wrap me up and sleep!

IMPATIENCE

O God, the earth is trampled down,
In sin and shame it lieth;
From every land beneath the sun
A voice accusing crieth.
The nations strive in deadly wars,
The cannon speaks in thunder:
“ Arise, and break the prison bars,
And rend the chains asunder!”

The earth is worn by cries of death,
And vexed by petty tyrants;
Sad wailings rise on every breath;
Thou only keepest silence.
Where angels with the harp and song
In heaven's courts adore Thee,
Can ever mortal grief or wrong
Or prayers come up before Thee?

Impatience

Yes; the deep mystery unfolds
In light of Revelation;
Sealed for the latter times He holds
His wine of indignation.
Earth's wanderers murmur in their night:
"His chariot-wheels turn slowly;"
Angels that see Him in the light
Make answer: "Holy, holy!"

Justice sits thronéd overhead,
Beyond the highest places;
It is not for our feet to tread
Where angels veil their faces;
Before the burning of the Seven
We earthly well may falter;
We only know the answer given
The souls beneath the altar.

In white robes stand the witnesses,
Mid incense-clouds enwreathing;
"How long?" they cry—a little space
Before the sword's unsheathing.
Daily with that accusing band
The earth's down-trodden gather;
And ministers of vengeance stand
Ever before the Father.

“ My Love is Deep ”

Faith sees His purpose shining pure
Beyond our sight's discerning.
O, just and equal, slow and sure
The mills of God are turning!
Even so, Great Ruler! on whose crown
Eternal years are hoary;
We lay in dust our wisdom down—
Thy patience is Thy glory.

MISCELLANEOUS

“MY LOVE IS DEEP”

SOME wild things have I dared, and some
Strange things have hoped. I cannot see
If these high hopes are doomed to be
Dashed from the heights they've clomb.

The wind is raging very high,
The earth is strewn with autumn leaves,
Mournful as when the spirit grieves
Its summer hopes should die.

It's midnight now! And flickering low
The wasted wick burns drear and dim.
About my brain strange fancies swim,
Strange feelings round me flow.

I cannot sigh, I cannot weep;
I smile not, yet I am not sad.
I mourn not, yet I am not glad
I've learned my love is deep.

LOVE'S FEAR

I LONG, yet fear to love! for I have seen
So much of falsehood and so much of guile,
And I have known such dark and deadly sin
Lurk in the silence of a beaming smile,
And in my own heart-chambers there have been
So many sorrows rankling all the while,
That when my soul sits brooding like a dove
I think of this—and long, yet fear to love!

I long, yet fear to love! I could not bear
To fling my rich affections unto one
Whose inmost spirit was not wholly fair
In love less pure and lavish than mine own;
And then my heart would break in its despair
To find the visions it had dreamed o'erthrown;
So, when my heart to pulses wildly move,
I think of this—and long, yet fear to love.

I long, yet fear to love! My soul hath bled
From its too perfect trust in vows unkept,
And I had deemed that all my love was dead.
Yet now I know that it hath only slept;

To Harriet

But, oh! if evermore about my head
There sweeps the tempest that before hath swept,
Heart, mind and brain would wrecked and shattered
 prove,
And knowing this—I long, yet fear to love!

I long, yet fear to love! Oh! who will come
 And speak the words I am athirst to hear?
O, who will make this yearning heart her home
 And lie there, thrilling thro' each mystic year?
And who will touch these lips so cold and dumb
 With the live coal from love's own altar clear?
Is there no answer? Must my spirit rove
Unwoke as now? and long, yet fear to love?

TO HARRIET

SHE was not lovely, but to me
She was as holy as the night,
When the strange stars are flinging light
 Thro' heaven's eternity.

I have turned from them to her and wept;
And when I saw her earnest eyes

To Harriet

Flashing such solemn sympathies,
Jesu! I could have leapt

Right thro' her eyes into her heart,
And ask'd no higher heaven than this,
To closely nestle in my bliss
And never more depart.

O, Harriet! thou hast been to me
Like a pale crystalline tear
Set round with smiles. I cannot hear
What I am unto thee!

.

I know not, but my brain is wild!
And yet I have been sometimes blest
With visions of thyself, and rest
Have on my day-dreams smiled.

And I have seen thee weep, and then
I longed to kiss the tears away,
And see thee like an April day
Change into joy again.

And I have held thy hand in mine!
I would have pressed it to my heart,

The Faint Adieu

But that I feared it might impart
Some bitterness to thine.

And I have dared to place my fingers
On thy sweet forehead and thy hair,
And aye, I marvel much if there
One mark of mine still lingers.

One mark of mine, one thought of me!
Harriet, it is not much I ask,
But, oh! 'twill be a bitter task
To tear my heart from thee!

THE FAINT ADIEU

SHE hung upon his neck, suffused in tears
Like a flower bending with its weight of dew,
Weeping as tho' the griefs of all her years
Lay in the fountains of her orbs of blue;
And then there came—scarce heard by their own ears,
Whispers of constancy—the faint adieu,
At last one long, rapt kiss, a stifled moan,
Receding footsteps, and she stood—alone!

Summer Night

They parted all too soon! just when the fire
Of each heart's passion sparkled in their eyes;
Just when the bloom of all young life's desire
Had tinged their warm cheeks with its tell-tale dyes;
Just when love's finger struck the trembling lyre
And woke the sound that all too quickly dies,
Yet never died with them that hour they parted,
And each past on in silence, weary-hearted.

They never met again! The world was cold,
And fate was haughty while their friends were stern,
As life passed quickly and they soon grew old,
Laying their young hopes in its funeral urn.
Both hands are clasped around it! Both hearts fold
Beneath their wings that past to which they turn;
The ruined shrine where all their sympathies
Worship forevermore with streaming eyes.

SUMMER NIGHT

COME here and look at God! The great round moon
Hangs 'mong the stars upon the verge of heaven
Like a vast hope within a boundless soul
Brimful of lofty majesty; the stars
Wait on her steps as blooming pages wait
Upon a reigning queen. Onward she sweeps

Summer Night

With regal footsteps up the vaulted sky,
Beaming her smiles upon her satellites
As on her suitors beams a peerless maid.
Far in the west the glowing heaven bends down,
Kissing the sunset hills—like a rapt youth
Embracing his beloved. In the south
The boundless ocean, slumbering peacefully,
Looks like eternity at rest. Our ship
With her white folded wings lies anchored there
Like an angel sleeping on the breast of God.
Hid in yon thicket's heart, the nightingale
Pours her wild music in the ear of night
Till it seems drunk with joy. Hark! How her song
Wells forth delicious from a joyous heart,
Sweet as the music of an angel's harp
Attuned by Gabriel's hand. How mystical
And dream-like comes the murmur of the stream
That babbles thro' the meadows; it is like
A virgin beauty who in bridal dreams
Vaguely, and in half words, tells to the night
The secret of her soul!

The panting breeze
Throbs tremulous on yon green hill of pines,
Like the hopeful trembling of a stripling's heart,
Earnest, yet all untried. Far off I see
The red fires gleaming in the village homes,
Flashing their strange lights even at my feet,
As prophets flash their gorgeous flaming thoughts

On Receipt of a Daguerreotype

Across the nick of time. The green earth sleeps
Beneath the eye of heaven, like a fair girl,
O'er whose white finger the betrothal ring,
Graven with her lover's name and set with gems,
Lies glittering like the stars—for thus hath God
Writ his solemn name upon the virgin earth,
Whom he will one day wed.

ON RECEIPT OF A DAGUERREOTYPE

THE flashing light may live thy form
In living lines of breathing grace,
May give each tint a tone as warm
As that which melts o'er thy dear face;
But in my soul and on my heart
With deeper colors, truer aim,
A loftier power than meager art
Hath graved thy image and thy name.

And rain or wind, and storm or shine
May mar the sunlight's subtlest skill,
While all the floods and frosts of time
But cut thine image deeper still;
For love is not like earthly things,
To die when it is old and hoar;
With its true heart and buoyant wings
It swells and soars forevermore.

“BUT LET IT PASS”

“Do not write in my album; write separately.”

A Y, it is well! my fierce and fiery mood
Would ill beseem its wealth of whispered hopes.
Aye, it is well! for Etna's molten flood
And the deep greenery of summer slopes—
Things utterly apart—like love and hate,
Should, as thou say'st, be far and separate.

And yet perchance their love must yield to mine
In height and depth and madding earnestness,
For when a poet drinks of love's strong wine
His calmest dreams are passionate excess:
Wherefore—but let that pass! I am thy brother,
And yet I love thee as I love none other.

None other, no, not one: there was a time—
Let that too pass—her grave is o'er the sea
Among the purple billows of a clime
That broke her heart, and crushed and maddened me;
But that it is my Mother's biding place,
I should ere this have curst it and its race!

“ But Let It Pass ”

I had some things to say: I know not what,
I am as one who wanders in a trance;
I only know my brain is wild and hot,
That my blood swiftens, and my proud heart pants
With a new madness, sweet, yet terrible,
I reckon not if it be of heaven or hell.

I had some things to say; but let them pass,
I will not wrong thy heart with selfish words;
And more—my life is withering as the grass
Withers away on sunny slopes and swards,
'Neath the keen edge of the remorseless scythe:
Well—let it cut: thou hast not seen me writhe.

And yet remember me as one whose soul
Was not all fret, or phantasy, or flame,
But write me on thy heart, as on a scroll,
One whose strange spirit sorrow could not tame,
Rash—yet no craven; his own nature's slave,
And headlong as a fierce careering wave.

Farewell! and do not utterly forget
Him who would peril his immortality,
For one close kiss of thine; when our eyes met,
Didst thou not think mine own looked yearningly?
Gleamed they not hotly—even as molten brass?
Ay! and thine own were calm: but let it pass.

A FRAGMENT

[From an unfinished poem.]

TO-NIGHT the moon is pale! Twelve moons
to-night

And at this hour and on this spot, I stood
Thrilling with manly pride. I'd set a gem
On the forehead of the world, and as I stood
Looking far out into the pensive night,
I saw it throbbing on man's stately brow
As a star throbs on the arched front of heaven,
And on the wings of the hushed and stilly air
There came a murmur of applause from men
Whose wondering hearts ensphered its flushing light.

She, too, was here—o'ercharged with earnest love,
Like a young angel brimming o'er with bliss,
Leaning on me with such a fervent trust
As holy saints lean on the arm of God!
I was her God! her spirit lay in mine
All pure and pearly, as a dewdrop lies
Emboldened in a rose's heart. She clung
Unto my soul with such a jealous love
As a young mother clings unto the babe
That made her first a matron; here she stood

The Palace of Thought

With her white finger pointing to the sky,
Thick sown with lustrous stars, as earth is sown
With cherub children's eyes.

“Clement,” she said,
“These are thy witnesses,” then burst in tears
Like a full cloud pouring its heart in rain.

THE PALACE OF THOUGHT

I DO believe a grand thought never dies,
I do believe that after-love is best,
When the strange fire that lay within the eyes
And the wild singing of the heart's unrest
Have passed away, and we are calm and wise,
And think upon the love that makes us blest;
I do believe there's more of heaven in this
Than all the eloquence of earlier bliss.

We reel beneath the first as from a blow;
We watch its splendor till our eyes are dim;
We revel in its nectar till we grow
Dizzy and drunken, faint in every limb;
And so we sleep and dream, then wake to know
Our rapturous songs have deepened to a hymn,
Whose sweeter music, like a heavenly psalm,
Freshens our souls with drops of holy balm.

The Palace of Thought

Ay; there it stands, crowning the grand old woods

Like a white angel on a hill of thought,
Peopling the song-birds' ancient solitudes

With deeper joy than spring-time ever brought,
As, full of lofty majesty, it broods

O'er the fair images that are unwrought
In its transparent soul, while serfs and kings
Rest in the cool shade of its mighty wings.

Thou'rt wedded to our years, and it is well.

We are impulsive, and do need a bride
Whose rapt affection lives unchangeable

Thro' all our days of loneliness and pride;
So we may lean upon her love, and dwell

In the pure heart where rest is, till the tide
That o'er our being flings its boisterous waves
Rolls surging back into the sullen caves.

As a fond mother, with o'er-brimming heart

Stands up and gospels all her sons with truth,
While the warm tears that all unbidden start

Throb back an answer from the soul of youth;
So stand thou up forever, and impart

To the world's heart all fair things that may
smoothe

The rugged heights of that stupendous shore,
O'er which we hasten on for evermore!

“There is Hope for Thee”

A stream of souls runs thro' thee, and I hear
The dreamy murmur of their sympathies,
And how, like pealing thunder on my ear,
There burst the solemn, grand old symphonies
Which, like the music of the upper sphere,
Are but the lofty-languaged utterances
Of highest yearnings, and all earnest dreams
That lie in thy pure heart, like pearls in streams.

But now, adieu! Thy greatness is so vast,
I cannot grasp its wide immensity;
I muse upon the grandeur that thou hast
Till I am lost as on a boundless sea;
And so, farewell! My heart is throbbing fast,
Its hopes, like tears, run streaming into thee;
I see them pulsing on thy leaves and flowers
As on earth's greenery hang the joyous showers.

“THERE IS HOPE FOR THEE”

THERE is hope for thee, poor erring one
With sin and sorrow curst and crushed,
Through the thick darkness gleams the sun,
With a pale, sad beauty flushed.

“There is Hope for Thee”

The lone wind sobbeth not so loud,
Heaven's breath is kissing flower and tree,
The blue sky bursts through yonder cloud—
There is hope, poor soul, for thee!

There is hope for thee, poor erring heart
All torn and bleeding and unblest,
There are balm-leaves to anoint the part
That's festering in thy breast.
There are aids for all thy trembling limbs
Till they are firm and strong and free,
There are tearful hopes and prayerful hymns
Breathed forth, poor heart, for thee!

Yes! there is hope for thee, poor soul,
All wild and wayward as thou wast,
So let the future moments toll
The death-knell of the past.
There are eyes that strain to see thee start,
And bosoms panting like a sea,
Press onward then, poor sorrowing heart,
For there is hope for thee!

“ DEAL GENTLY ”

DEAL gently with the fallen one,
Thou who hast kept thy higher birth;
Pray for the erring heart, nor shun
The outcast of the earth.
Thou knowest not the heavy waves
Of agony which o'er him roll,
Thou canst not tell the woe that laves
Forever round his soul.

Deal gently with the fallen one,
Speak lovingly to the unwise,
Perchance repentance hath begun
Its work of tears and sighs.
And kindly words in earnest given,
With gentle hopes in love expressed,
May win a soul from earth to heaven,
And give the wearied rest.

Deal gently with the fallen one,
All dark and guilty tho he be,
For scorn is not of heaven, and none
Are from the tempter free;

My Lost One

We all may sin ; thou mightest err,
Should syren tongues thy ears accost,
O friend, be then a comforter
Unto the lonely lost!

MY LOST ONE

I am young in years, yet old in woe,
And my hair is flecked with gray,
And I pass thro' life like a dreamer now,
While none may read from eye or brow
That the light hath passed away.

I have lived with a love as high as heaven
And deep as the lowest hell,
I have seen my life's hopes crusht and riven,
Till, aye, like a bolt of burning levin,
The agony on me fell.

I have lain on the bosom of one as fair
As a dream of young delight;
I have felt her hand on my dark brown hair,
And the touch of her lips was pure and rare
As the thrill of starry night.

My Lost One

The passionate gush of her wild, sweet song,
And the light of her loving eye
With the flame in her heart were all mine own,
For our joyous loves had grown so strong
They never more might die.

But a wrinkled wordling, ripe for hell,
Came in with his hoard of gold,
And robbed my heart of its Annabel.
O God! How my soul did burn and swell
As I stood and saw her sold.

Ay! Bartered off with a broken heart
At mammon's damnéd shrine,
But the chords of her young life snapped apart,
And she felt no more the terrible dart
That's thrust forever in mine.

So, I live along in a strange wild trance,
And await my time to die.
I am often thrilled with an eloquent glance,
And my soul leaps up and my spirit pants,
'Neath glance of a luminous eye.

But oh! When the midnight hour is on
And the past goes flitting by,
With its fearful eyes and its hollow moan,
I hold my heart by a smothered groan
And pray that I may die.

THE POET'S WEALTH

WHO says the poet's lot is hard ?
Who says it is with misery rife ?
Who pities the deluded bard
That dreams away his life ?
Go thou and give thy sympathy
Unto the crowd of common men ;
The poet needs it not, for he
Hath joys beyond thy ken.

Yea, he hath many a broad domain
Which thou, O man, hath never seen,
Where never comes the pelting rain
Or stormy winter keen.
There ever balmy is the air,
And ever smiling are the skies,
For beauty ever blossoms there—
Beauty that never dies.

There sportive fancy loves to roam
And cull the sweets from every flower,
While meditation builds her home
Beneath some forest-bower ;

My Lost Tones

There, too, the poet converse holds
With spirit of the long ago,
And dim futurity unfolds
Secrets for him to know.

Then say not that in wretchedness
The poet spends his weary days,
Say not that hunger and distress
Are guerdon for his lays;
But rather say that lack of gold
Unto the bard is greatest bliss,
And say, he is not earth-controlled
Whilst owning wealth like this.

MY LOST TONES

I AM old, perchance, before my time,
And my heart is wet with tears,
While on my life is the frost and rime
Of the gathered storms of years.

There is many a ruined shrine that lies
In the paths which I have trod,
And much that's buried from human eyes
And only known to God.

My Lost Tones

There is many a love that hath grown cold,
And many an unkept vow,
And much—oh! how much, that I would fold
To my lonely spirit now.

There is wild, vague music floating down
Thro' the dim departed days,
But I can not note whence comes the tone,
So thick is the tearful haze.

Perchance 'tis the wail of wild unrest
From the years that have passed by,
Or it may be discord from the sobbing breath
Of some dream I left to die.

Ah well! there's a shadow across my brow,
There's a mist before my sight,
Yet the beautiful thought is o'er me now
That the stars are with the night.

I know that the seeming ills of fate
Are but love's in strange disguise,
And that even the terrible specter, hate,
May have soft and motherly eyes.

So I wait; and perchance in the Far-to-be
I shall find that the mystic hymn
Which seemed so solemn and sad to me,
Was the voice of the cherubim.

AGONY

ONCE when I and Sorrow pondered
O'er the wealth my soul had squandered,
In the days when pride and passion
Burned within me like a hell;
Then my life grew pale and haggard,
And my spirit reeled and staggered
With the agony that tore it,
In the dream that on me fell.

In the calm of summer even,
When the angels unperceiven
Come and wave their snowy pinions
O'er our fetter-furrowed brows;
Ere the morn had yet arisen
I had set myself to listen
For the stars, whose eyes would watch me
Thro' the green-leaved chestnut boughs.

And I waited long, and longer,
And the yearning still grew stronger
For the coming of the starlight
Out into the quiet skies.
Then my soul was wet and glistening,
And my spirit ached with listening,
Till at last like madden'd famine
Flashed the yearning thro' my eyes.

Agony

Like a rare and queenly maiden
With a wealth of beauty laden,
Moving with a grace imperial

Rose the golden-tresséd moon;
But her calm and stately glory
Unto me seemed old and hoary,
For the stars alone I waited
On that solemn night in June.

And the lengthening shadows lengthened,
And the famine grew and strengthened,
As the soft winds smote my forehead,

Swept like kisses thro' my hair;
But the deep and earnest gladness
Came like mockery to my madness,
When I turned to heaven, imploring—
But the stars were never there!

And the gracious moon kept brightening
As my spirit leapt like lightning,
And my eyeballs were consuming

With the agonizing heat;
And a white dove settled near me,
Neither did the songbirds fear me,
For a robin came and warbled
In a rosebush at my feet.

Agony

And I quivered like an aspen
When the whirlwind hath it claspen,
And the hells of aspiration
 Flamed with thousand-fold desire;
But upon my strange perdition
Fell no sanctifying vision,
So the molten anguish mounted
 Till my soul was all on fire.

Then this feeling wakened slowly,
That my soul had grown unholy,
And I knew I was a leper
 As my waning life grew dim;
And the wind rose wild and tearful,
Then again fell low and fearful,
With a broken-hearted wailing
 Like an unloved orphan's hymn.

And I knew that I was dying,
As the solemn wind kept sighing,
In its prelude to the requiem
 It should utter o'er my soul;
While my strained eyes grew leaden
And my limbs began to deaden,
As a torment writhed throughout me—
 'Twas the last dreg in the bowl.

The Human Statue

Then a blesséd dream came to me,
And I heard my first love woo me,
Till her warm tears rained like music
 On my swoll'n and livid lips;
And her sweet and low-voiced breathing
Quenched the fire within me seething,
And I knew my soul had trembled
 Thro' its terrible eclipse.

So my soul awoke from dreaming,
While the holy stars were beaming
Like the gentle eyes of mothers,
 When their trust is all in heaven;
So, my trembling spirit's sadness
Melted into blesséd gladness,
As I 'rose and bowed my forehead,
 For I knew I was forgiven.

THE HUMAN STATUE

An address delivered before the students of Warnersville
Academy, New York, June 2, 1855.

WE all do carve as statues evermore!
And some are sculptured with most living
 skill,

And some are rude and lowly; while some seem

The Human Statue

So strangely fair in their deformity
We weep, and loathe, and cling unto them still;
And thus are shaped life's subtle essences,
And thus all things do symbolize the soul.

Therefore, O friends—in this your earnest youth—
When loftiest visions of the future stand
Throbbing before your sight, note every line
In their high-thoughted features, and so carve
The grand hope into form, that it shall stand
Through all the years majestic 'fore your sight
As a white statue from its pedestal
Smiles on the sculptor whose large skill has wrought
Thus into wondrous symmetry the thought
That erst lay in his soul.

Dig deep for truth,
And when your hands have struck the hidden vein
Its waters shall gush up to meet your lips
With a most tempting loveliness, whereof
Your souls may sate their thirst forevermore.
So live, and ye shall flourish; and, perchance,
When your green springtime, with its buds and
 blooms,
Passes to the ripe autumn, there shall be
Such mellow plenty of rich-flavored fruit
That the old epicure—the world—shall bend

The Human Statue

And stagger beneath her treasures, as a vine
Totters beneath its luscious load of grapes.

So live, and ye shall flourish! And if all
The fibers of each heart do cling to heaven;
If all your wealth of sympathies be flung
Above the skies—above the burning stars—
Above all glories up to our own God,
Then shall your souls have prescience of all time,
And stand among the angels!

Ye shall speak

And men shall hear in wonder, for your voice
Shall sway the nations as a shaken reed;
The long, long suffering then shall come to you,
And the heart-broken—all the tearless ones—
With those who writhe in bondage; and your souls
Shall kneel before their sorrows, and shall weep,
Then rise up stern and mighty! When your eyes
Shall loose their leaping lightnings, and your lips
Unroll their crashing thunders, till all wrong
Trembles like creeping murder in the night.

And smiles shall be about you, and warm tears,
And gladness as the sunshine. You shall rest
Your love upon all children, and gray hairs
Shall thrill your hearts like music! Ye shall be

The Human Statue

Children of poesy, loving all flowers,
Rejoicing in all tempests! Ye shall speak
The meaning of the mountains, and unfold
The mysteries that do lie within the stars,
And wait in quiet valleys! Unto you
The winds shall be a languaged utterance,
And streams shall have in you another voice,
And seas, and roaring torrents!

Ye shall read
And render in our tongue the solemn hymn
Anthemed by all the ages! And our souls
Shall garner up the kingdom of your thought,
And form a mighty universe of mind.

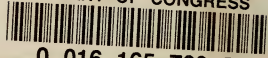
Therefore, O friends, in this your earnest youth,
“Excelsior” be ever on your lips;
Tell out your message boldly in the ear
Of the great world, and from the dark eclipse
Drag forth the hidden light. Then ye shall hear
The harmony of angels, and the strain
Of the high One’s own choristers; and then
The voice ye breathe unto the sons of men
Shall catch the music of the other sphere
And back to your own hearts return in love again.







LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 016 165 733 5